

Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE GREAT EUROPEAN RAIL ROAD SHOW.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1981



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 25, No. 5 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1981

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

This poster was probably used by Sells Bros. between 1874 and 1877. Certain identification can not be made as the show did not use rails until 1878, by which time the owners' name, not Great European, was the title.

This half sheet, black and white lithograph was printed by Strobridge and Co., that firm's name between 1867 and 1879. The pastoral background is typical of 19th century parade bills. Original in Pfening Collection.

CHS ELECTION

The election of officers and directors of the Circus Historical Society takes place on odd years. The terms are for two years.

A ballot for the 1981 election is enclosed with this issue of the BANDWAGON. Only

CHS members are entitled to vote, the membership number must be shown on your ballot for your vote to be counted. BANDWAGON subscribers are not entitled to vote.

Please mark your ballot, place a stamp on it and return it, self-addressed, to the election commissioner at once.

The results of the election will be published in the November-December 1981 issue of the BANDWAGON.

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Photos, Banners, Postcards.

Any Info. on

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ATTRACTIONS**

past and present

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2801 B'Fulton St.
Berk. Ca. 94705**

PRINTER'S GOOF

An article appeared in the July-August 1981 *BANDWAGON* titled "Two Years Under The Big Top."

Somehow two pages of the article were not set in type and did not appear, causing some readers to write asking if part of the story was missing.

In rechecking the original manuscript it was found that two pages of the original had indeed been "lost."

The printer acknowledged the error and has reprinted the entire article, including the missing pages. You will find this article inserted in the center of this issue. It can easily be removed and placed in the prior issue for filing.

The Editor's face is also red for letting this slip by. Sorry about that.

CHRISTMAS ISSUE ADVERTISING

The November-December *Bandwagon* is always the largest of the year. This is only possible because of the many ads that provide additional income to allow increased pages.

Your support in taking Christmas greeting ads is requested. Advertising rates are as follows: full page \$80, half page \$40 and quarter page \$20. Please send your ad copy and payment to arrive by November 20.

Because of increased printing costs your help is especially needed this year.

BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966 all but Mar.-Ap., July-Aug., Nov., Dec.

1967 all but May-June

1968 all issues available

1969 all but Mar.-Ap., May-June, Nov.-Dec.

1970 all but Sept.-Oct.

1971 all but May-June

1972 all issues available

1973 all issues available

1974 all issues available

1975 all issues available

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1977 all issues available

1978 all issues available

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Price is now \$2.50 each. Add 90¢ postage.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
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Columbus, Ohio 43221

A NEW BOOK ON AN OLD CIRCUS

The Story of the Campbell Bros. Circus The Canvas That Covered The Plains

Hard cover, bound in canvas, One Hundred and Twenty Pages, with great old photographs, all before Nineteen Twelve.

By ED BARDY, with personal recollections of GERTRUDE CAMPBELL WEHLING, daughter of VIRG CAMPBELL, one of the Founders. Preface by C.P. "CHAPPIE" FOX.

"This important enterprise has had very little written about it. The collaboration between GERTRUDE CAMPBELL WEHLING and ED BARDY, is most welcomed. Circus fans and Americana historians will welcome this book with its rare and magnificent photographs and many new anecdotes."

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RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY CIRCUS

The price is \$15.00 post paid. Mailed special Fourth Class.

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NEW NEW NEW!!!

ANNIE OAKLEY and BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST By Isabelle Sayers

An authentic pictorial biography (102 illustrations) primarily devoted to the seventeen years she spent with Buffalo Bill.

The bulk of the photographs portray Annie in her association with the show-in publicity photos, in different segments of her sensational act. The remaining photos depict the Buffalo Bill Show and its chief participants.

Its 96 pages of 8 1/4 x 11 fine quality paper with 102 illustrations make it a reasonably priced paperback at \$5.50 postpaid.

Send 50¢ stamps or coin for complete list of Model Circus wagons and Baggage Horses, Books, Programs and other circus collectibles.

Betty Schmid
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THE FRED BUCHANAN RAILROAD CIRCUSES 1923-31

Robbins Bros. Circus

Part IV — The 1926 Season

by Joseph T. Bradbury

During the first two weeks in January 1926 there was scant news in the trade publications concerning Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus which was in its quarters at Granger, Iowa. The Jan. 2, 1926 *Billboard* did carry an interesting advertisement of the Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Co. in which appeared a photo of a new 70 ft. stock car the firm had built for Robbins Bros. The show's title was painted on the car's letterboard. A week later the *Billboard* said that the administration building at the Granger quarters which had been constructed a year ago had a room in which owner Buchanan had hung photographs of prominent circus men, past and present. Portraits included those of George W. Christy, Charles Sparks, Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, B. E. Wallace, Cole, Barnum, Bailey, etc. It was mentioned that Mr. Buchanan was actively seeking photos of additional circus greats to join the others.

The Jan. 16, 1926 *Billboard* came forth with the first real news of the activities now in progress at the Granger quarters. Headlines said the Robbins Bros. quarters were the scene of activity, and the article mentioned that owner Buchanan had placed an order with Mt. Vernon for four new 72 ft. steel flat cars. Supposedly this would be the yearly addition which will soon transform the Robbins train into one of solid steel cars. (Author's

Photo No. 2—Flag bearers leading Robbins Bros. street parade at Decorah, Iowa, May 18, 1926. Next unit in the line of march is the No. 1 big show band riding the Belgium Tableau. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

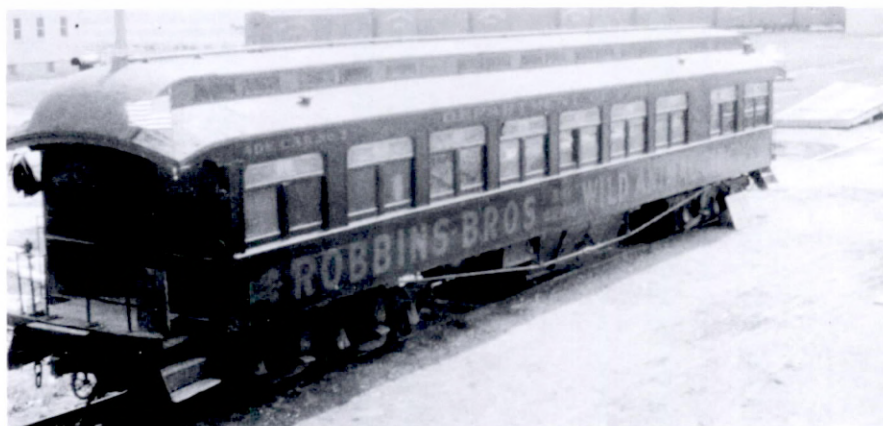


Photo No. 1—Robbins Bros. advertising car No. 1, season of 1926. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

note. As mentioned several times before, the absence of adequate photos picturing the Robbins Bros. train during these years makes it impossible to verify the truth of these reports.). Ed Brannon, general agent, now in Chicago, is due to arrive at Granger in a few weeks. George W. Johnson, 24 hour man, is in charge of the harness shop and is putting finishing touches on new regalia for the herd of 12 elephants to be carried during the coming season. Among the new buildings at the quarters is a huge blacksmith shop with a full set of modern equipment. Each year Mr. Buchanan adds an additional building to the farm. Last year a large hotel building was constructed where workmen are lodged and fed. A final note said there were 3,000 ft. of side trackage upon which are parked the show's railroad cars.

With the improvements and new additions made to the Granger set-up during the past few years everything connected with the show during the winter months can be handled, wardrobe, wagons, tents, menagerie, and properties.

The *Billboard's* coverage of the Buchanan quarters during the early months of 1926 was perhaps the finest during the history of the show. The Jan. 23, 1926 *Billboard* said that Buchanan's Circus Farm at Granger, Iowa is a big attraction for tourists and circus fans. It continued,

"Iowa's Circus Farm, owned by Col. Fred Buchanan, the home of Robbins Bros. Circus, is one of the chief attractions these days for automobile tourists and circus fans living in Des Moines and the surrounding country.

Photo No. 3—Cage drawn by four horse hitch in Robbins Bros. street parade at Decorah, Iowa, May 18, 1926. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.





Photo No. 4—Robbins Bros. street parade at Decorah, Iowa, May 18, 1926. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

It lies 16 miles from the city and is within 2 miles of the town of Granger. Running through the farm is the Central Iowa Traction Company's tracks, with a station known as Yanktown located upon the farm. The mile or more of sidetrack are now loaded down with the circus train, and when approaching, the place looks quite like a circus city. (Author's note. The previous article putting the footage of sidetrack at 3,000, is more realistic). The buildings upon the farm are 20 in number and stand out like a factory town down East. There is now a hum of activity about the place made by the gangs working in the various departments. Every division is represented by a building designed especially for the work. Down in the paint shop—a new 2 story building—the painters under the supervision of Jasper Pogue, are engaged in spreading the gold leaf upon the wagons. All the colors of the rainbow are indulged in, and the wagons promise to be the best known to the business."

A week later the *Billboard* observed that Earl Sinnott, general superintendent, is busy looking after the minute details connected with the Buchanan farm and repairs are going on. Joe Bullington, master mechanic, is building new wagons and refurbishing those that need new brakes and tires. Wagons, particularly the big tableaux, are all being "re-braked" with steel crowns and brake shoes. In the blacksmith shop, a new structure, the master mechanic with his assistants are constructing a new seal den, stake driver, stake and chain wagon, canvas

wagon, property wagon, as well as overhauling and rebuilding a dozen or more other large wagons used in the circus. Blackie Jack Kane is superintendent of the baggage horses and with his assistants, is keeping the stock in good shape for the coming season. Roy Jewell is supt. of ring stock, and John (Dutch) Schultz, supt. of animals, is looking after the cats and hay eating animals. Elephants are going through their daily round of training and several new acts will be presented the coming season. Jewell is assisted by a corps of young trainers. John (Fat Lemon) Boyd, trainmaster, is wintering in Des Moines. Ward Small is chief of the cookhouse and William Ganoe is head steward. A most interesting item in the article said that *Pathe Weekly News Record* recently filmed 800 ft. at the quarters showing the 12 elephants, lions, and other animals. One scene showed baggage stock in a pasture being run in front of the camera. A final note said that *The Des Moines Sunday Morning Register* in a recent issue carried a page and a half in its rotogravure section of scenes taken on the circus farm of the wild animals and buildings.

The show ran a number of advertisements in the trade publications prior to start of the season. This one appeared in the Feb. 6, 1926 *Billboard*.

"ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Wants, Second Prima Donna, Ballet Girls, Menage Riders, Single Iron Jaw Acts, Arab Act. Also Wild West Show People. Address Bert Rickman, Equestrian Director, Robbins Bros. Circus, Harwood Apt., 14th and Locust Streets, Des Moines, Iowa."

The Feb. 13, 1926 *Billboard* had this advertisement.

"ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Wants

Largest Circus in The World
Giving a Free Street Parade

Thrilling, Amazing, Dazzling
and Gorgeous Performance



Miss Iowa, the World's Most Famous Hippopotamus

Circus Day Is Tuesday
In Green Bay

Mammoth FREE Street Parade TUESDAY ONLY

3 Hours of Unsurpassed Marvels Stupendously
Presenting the World's Biggest Amusement
Features.

Two Mammoth Pageants Requiring Hundreds
of Performers, Troupes of Foreign Acts, Im-
ported Especially for This Season.



Miss Columbia,
the Only Living
Elephant Born
in America

Robbins Bros. Big 4 Ring Circus
and
Ponca Bills Wild West

Exhibited At

Green Bay Tuesday, July 13

Advance Ticket Sale to be at Corner Drug Store, Corner Washington and Pine
Streets, Show Day, same price as charged upon Circus grounds.

Photo No. 5—Newspaper advertisement for Robbins Bros. stand at Green Bay, Wis., July 13, 1926. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

Side Show Performers. Address, Granger, Iowa."

The Feb. 20, 1926 *Billboard* had an interesting article headed, "HIPPO SOLD TO ROBBINS SHOW." It noted that the last "baby" of Venus and Adonis, said to be America's only breeding hippopotami, property of the Memphis, Tenn. municipal zoo at Overton Park, has been sold for \$3250.00 to Robbins Bros. Circus at Granger, Iowa. The young female hippo, 15 mos. old, and weighing 900 lbs. will be delivered to the circus about April 1. The article concluded by saying this was the third hippo that had been born to Venus and Adonis.

Last news coming from the Robbins quarters during the month of February was that Ed Brannan, general agent, had now been in Granger for 10 days and was handling advance matters and arranging for railroad contracts to move the Buchanan owned show. Bert Rickman, equestrian director, was in Missouri looking for some ring stock and O. L. Gilson, band director, was in quarters lining up the band for the coming season. The wagon shop was running full blast and turning out several new vehicles. The 12 elephants had gone through the winter in fine shape and plans were announced that the menagerie is to be enlarged. Opening date for the 1926 season was set for April 24 at Perry, Iowa.

The Mar. 6, 1926 *Billboard* said that the theme of conversation at the Granger quarters is the purchase of the new hippo which is soon to arrive. Also purchased are a string of high school, liberty, and dancing horses. Diamond Smith, sailmaker, is busy



Photo No. 6—Robbins Bros. used this colorful litho depicting trained wild animals in 1926. Color scheme has the title in Red on a cream background with other lettering in dark blue. The leopards and pumas are in their natural colors. Original litho is in the Pfening Collection. Photo by Kent Ghirard.

making cage covers for the parade wagons. "Fat Lemon" has a crew of men working on the train and a crew of railroad car painters is being organized to begin painting the train. Cliff Elwell, the scenic and animal artist, is busy on the tableaux wagons, revarnishing and retouching the pictorial scenes. Also being painted is a new ticket wagon, one of the largest ever constructed. Blackie Kane, boss hostler, is rapidly getting his animals in shape. Dutch Schultz is getting the animal barn ready for the arrival of the hippo.

In mid March Buchanan announced the staff roster for the 1926 Robbins Bros. season. It was as follows: Fred Buchanan, proprietor; James Morse, business manager; Les Minger, treasurer; John Schiller, auditor; E. L. Brannon, general agent; Dan Hoffman, railroad contractor; J. R. Hervey, local contractor; W. T. Buchanan, press contractor; Robert Buchanan, advance press agent; Robert Saul, press agent with show; Bert Rickman, equestrian director; Earl Sinnott, general supt.; C. W. Buchanan, supt., privileges; A. O. Gilson, musical director; Ralph Noble, supt. canvas; John Boyd, trainmaster; Blackie Kane, boss hostler; Jud Muckle, supt. commissary dept.; B. S. Reel, supt. lights; Arthur Painter, supt., props; Roy Jewell, supt. ring stock; W. Brown, supt. stock; Joe Kelly, supt. sleeping cars; George Johnson, 24 hr. man; C. H. (Highpockets) Baudendistel, supt. elephants; John Schultz, supt. animals; Fred May, blacksmith; Frank Ballinger, manager, advertising car No. 1; Joe Morse, legal adjuster.

The April 3, 1926 *Billboard* said that the Robbins Bros. menagerie was being enlarged, the new animals consisting of a hippo, a carload of 1700 lb.

Percherons, 2 leopards, a cage of birds, and two ostriches which arrived the past week. The menagerie will be almost twice as large as in the past. The arrival of the hippo last Saturday was a big event and newspapers featured it with stories and pictures. A christening of the hippo is scheduled to take place at the opening stand in Perry, Iowa, April 24. Governor Hammill is to be present and preside and W. T. Buchanan is to be in charge of the publicity. Other notes in the article said that the wagons were practically all completed and the railroad cars have been painted, reroofed and made watertight. The advertising car is a bright vermillion. Another new Pullman now in quarters is to take the place of the work car which will be discarded for the many conveniences the sleeper contains. C. W. Buchanan has arrived in quarters and Prof. Gilson is there. Bert Rickman went to Chicago to get additional features and fittings for the dressing room and ring.

The April 10, 1926 *Billboard* gave additional details on the arrival of the new hippo at Granger. The article said the event was heavily chronicled by the local press and cameramen photographed the unloading of the animal in the presence of a troop of Boy Scouts who had marched all the way from Des Moines to adopt the hippo as their mascot. On Sunday, Gov. John Hammill and his executive staff and their wives visited the quarters and inspected the animals, especially the hippo. Additional news in this extensive article said the Robbins show has fine train equipment and the quarters shine with newly painted wagons (tableau and baggage) resplendent with gold leaf. On the side track, 3000 ft. of railroad siding, each car has been newly painted, the flats in yellow, Pullmans in a gray-black. The train mostly has steel cars. A new coach and 2 new flats were added this week. Jack Kearns, boss hostler, is putting the stock into fine shape. The Schiller brothers, Bob and Jack (John) are in quarters and will be with the show. Two tigers are scheduled to arrive in a few days. Animals on hand



Photo No. 7—Another Robbins Bros. litho used in 1926 pictured trained bears. Color scheme has the title in red on a cream background with other lettering in dark blue. The bears are in various shades of black and brown. Original litho is in the Pfening Collection. Photo by Kent Ghirard.

include 12 elephants, 4 camels, a big line of cats, 2 ostriches, 2 leopards, a cage of birds, and the new hippo. The wild west section of the performance is to be even larger than last year and several new acts of a sensational nature have been added.

A final note in the *Billboard* just prior to opening of the season said that the Robbins train would leave Granger on April 20 for its Perry, Iowa opening date scheduled for April 24. It was announced that the hippo would be christened "Miss Iowa" at the show's opening and that the governor, professors of zoology at Iowa State University at Ames, and Drake University in Des Moines will take part in the ceremonies. Rehearsals of the performance would take place after the show's arrival in Perry.

We are very fortunate to have available for the 1926 installment of this Buchanan rail show series many notes from the late Col. William H. Woodcock Sr., who was a member of C. H. (Highpockets) Baudendistel's elephant department that season. Some of these notes from Woodcock came from him directly to the author over 20 years ago, others went from him to Chang Reynolds who has kindly made them available for this article.

Woodcock said the 1926 season began with 12 elephants in the Robbins herd; TOMMY, DING, BOO, BIG KATY, BIG JENNY, LITTLE BABE, COLUMBIA, ENA, TRILBY, MARGARET, BLANCHE, and TONY, the same animals as were present at the conclusion of the 1925 season. Changes that occurred later in the season will be mentioned at the appropriate time.

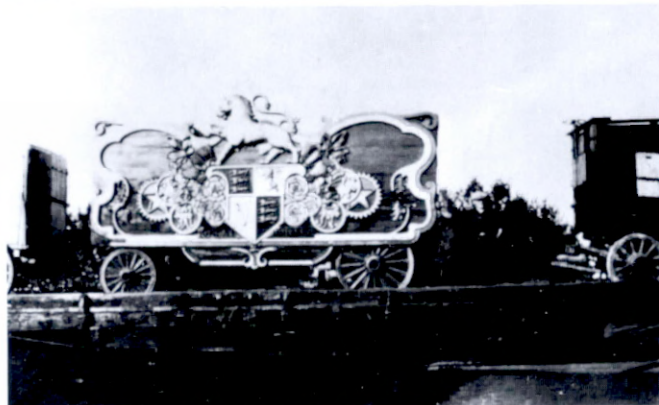
Woodcock also says that Robbins Bros. opened the 1926 season on 20 cars, which included 4 stocks, 6

coaches, 9 flats, and 1 advance. There were 9 cages in the menagerie.

The 1926 circus season was now at hand. Railroad circuses (flat car type) going out included; Ringling-Barnum, 100 cars; Sells-Floto, 30 cars; Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30 cars; John Robinson, 30 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars; Sparks, 20 cars; Robbins Bros., 20 cars; Christy Bros., 20 cars; Lee Bros., 15 cars; Heritage Bros., 15 cars; Walter L. Main, 15 cars; and Gentry Bros., 10 cars; The Miller Bros., 101 Ranch Wild West Show on 30 cars was also going out and would provide major competition. Gilly-tunnel car rail shows included Christ & Howe, 3 cars, and Cooper Bros., 2 cars. Overland circuses ready to make the 1926 season were Downie Bros. (completely motorized); Mighty Haag; Orange Bros.-Moon Bros.; Sells-Sterling; Atterbury Bros.; Barton Bros.; Ketrow Bros.; Knight Bros.; Bonhomme Bros.; O'Neil Bros.; Lamont Bros.; Great Keystone; Excel; M. L. Clark & Sons; Walter Bros.; Hoaglands, and Tom Atkinson. With the exception of the new Downie Bros. show, most of the mudders travelled with a combination of motorized trucks and horse drawn vehicles.

A significant development concerning the 1926 season was the final decision of the American Circus Corporation (Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, and Edward Ballard) for the shows they operated to present no street parades. The three corporation units, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and John Robinson, had gone out in 1925 intending to give no daily parades but after a month into the season the marches were restored for the remainder of the season. However, no parades at all for those circuses would be given in 1926.

Photo No. 8—Robbins Bros. loaded flat car, season of 1926. From left to right is shown a portion of a baggage wagon, the Great Britain tableau, and part of a cage. This shot vividly illustrates Woodcock's statement that there was much unused space after two flat cars were added to the Robbins train in mid-season 1926. Photo by Billy Dick (Joe Bradbury Collection).



Other rail show "non paraders" included Ringling-Barnum which had dispensed with the parade after the 1920 season and Al G. Barnes which gave up the march in mid-season 1924. The remainder of the flat car shows, including the 101 Ranch Wild West, continued to parade. Likewise, most of the overland shows gave a daily parade.

Generally, business conditions were good over the United States. Calvin (Silent Cal) Coolidge was in the White House and the Washington government gave the nation's circuses, and the public as well, little trouble in those tranquil days. Only the mobs, Capone and his fellows, the bootleggers and rum-runners got much flack from the Feds in 1926.

With few exceptions the previous season had been a good one for shows and it was expected 1926 would be a repeater.

Robbins Bros. opened as scheduled at Perry, Iowa, April 24, and the first news of the event came in the May 1, 1926 *Billboard* with a report headed, "CHRISTENING OF BABY HIPPO FEATURE OF ROBBINS SHOW OPENING AT PERRY, IOWA." The article went on to say that the weather was chilly and rainy in the morning but the sun came out at 2 P.M. The tent was packed at the matinee and there was a good showing in the evening. The beautiful parade moved on schedule and was viewed by many people. Gov. Hammill, the Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Secretary of Agriculture, and the State Auditor, arrived at 12:30 P.M. After luncheon at the Hotel Pattee with Will Buchanan, representing the circus, the party went to the circus grounds for the christening in the menagerie of the baby hippo which was called "Miss Iowa." At luncheon the governor delivered an address to the combined Business Men's Association and Commercial Club of Perry in which he told of the amount of money invested in the circus and spent each year in maintenance and that it brought in a great deal of money into the state and deserved the support of the people of

Iowa. It is said this is the first time in the history of this country that a governor christened an animal and dedicated a circus. Other notes said the Robbins circus is splendid in new canvas throughout, has a larger menagerie top, and more performers. Clown alley is in charge of Kenneth Waite and some new, clever numbers were introduced. Wagons, train, and paraphernalia glistened in new paint. The opening would have broken all records had the weather been more favorable as the governor's visit brought a large number of visitors to Perry.

A *Billboard* reporter caught the Robbins Bros. opening at Perry and reviewed the show in the May 8, 1926 *Billboard* with headlines, "COMPLETE REVIEW OF ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS." The article read as follows:

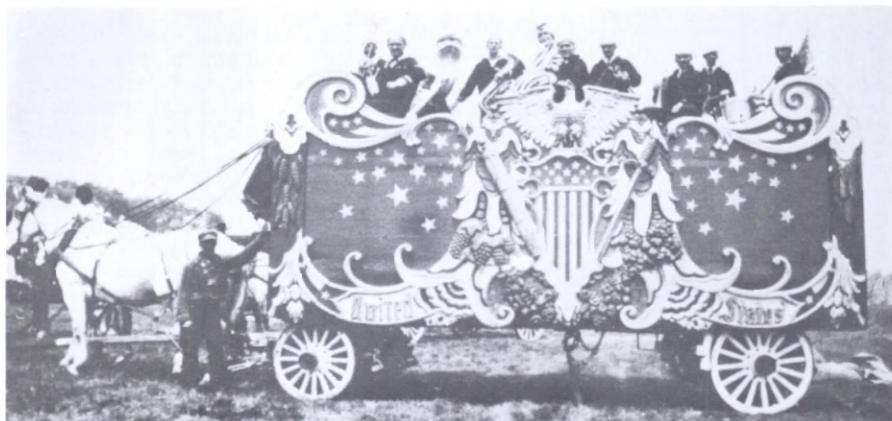
"A brief telegraphic report of the opening of the Robbins Bros. Circus at Perry, Ia., April 24, appeared in the last week's issue of the *Billboard*. Further details and a review of the performance have been received as follows:

"Quite the best circus Fred Buchanan has ever assembled is the one this year. The canvas is new throughout. The big top is 150 feet, with three 50-foot middle pieces. (Author's note. A 130 ft. round with three 40's would be more realistic, however the absence of photos leaves the matter in doubt). In the new menagerie tent are 12 elephants, 4 camels, 2 oxen, 10 cages (Woodcock's count of 9 is probably correct) of bears (brown and polar), lions, leopards, ostriches, seals, monkeys, pumas, tigers and a baby hippopotamus.

"Before going into the review of the performance the writer, Irene Shelley, Kansas City representative of the *Billboard*, wishes to compliment Kenneth Waite, producing clown, on

Photo No. 9—Unidentified trainer and 3 elephants on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1926. The elephants are probably Tommy, Ding, and Boo. Photo by Billy Dick (Joe Bradbury Collection).





his new and clever walkarounds and well-trained clowns.

"The opening spectacle, Fairyland, an Arabian night's dream, began with 10 fairies dancing out from elevated stage to center stage and 'Old King Cole,' represented by Les Klines, 'the boy wonder,' was seated on the first stage. Then the band, dressed as Arabians, marched in, followed by 16 beautiful horses, gaily caparisoned and with handsomely dressed riders, camels and elephants, with the prima donna, Marceline Montague, seated on the back of the largest elephant, lovely in a black and white costume. Hazel La Clare is second prima donna. Miss Montague sang as her first song 'Burning Sands' and received much applause. This was followed by a song from 'the boy wonder' entitled 'Long Ago.' Then Miss Montague sang 'Give Me Love' and Roger Jones' Florida (colored) Quartet, which had acted as slaves in the spectacle, stepped to the platform and sang, 'Jungleland.' The spec closed with the prima donna singing 'Back to Fairyland,' and a solo dance from the elevated stage to center stage by Miss White. The fairies are: Mary Rickman, Ruth Cain, Billie Lequet, Hazel Hackman, Frankie Payne, Edna Flot, Grace Haines, Zelda Boden and Lady Privette.

"Collies, Eskimo dogs, Shetland ponies and riding monkeys—both acts well presented by Mrs. Smith in ring

Photo No. 10—United States tableau with No. 2 big show band on top, Robbins Bros. "Parade of Nations," about 1926. Photos Nos. 10-18 are from a set owned by the late Paul Van Pool and picture units of the Robbins Bros. street parade. They were pasted in an album and undated but the late W. H. Woodcock Sr. said they were taken about 1926, the year he was with the show. Van Pool loaned the album to Woodcock to have copy prints made for himself and the author of this article. Joe Bradbury Collection.

one and Mr. Smith in ring two.

"In ring one, C. H. Baudendistel (Hi-Pockets) and three bulls. He is a master of elephants, and the bulls went thru their tricks with speed and effectiveness. 'Hi-Pockets' presented a new trick during his act. The elephant, Ding, picks up the trainer by the mouth and holds him in the air. In ring two, three elephants under 'Hi-Pockets' assistant's direction. The act closes with some clever dancing by all the bulls.

"Clown walkaround, presented by Waite and his 25 joeys.

"In the rings, the Matsamoka Jap troupes—feats executed deftly and quickly. Center stage, Smith's dogs,

Photo No. 11—Great Britain tableau with sideshow band on top, Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.



collies, Eskimo and Russian wolfhounds. Sport, collie dog, makes it a good act by jumping thru hoops of fire.

"Cimijotti horses. Four high-school horses in each ring. Beautiful whites and creams, well ridden and well trained. Riders—Mary Rickman, Helen Morris (Mrs. Whitey), Senorita Cimijotti, Ruth Cain, Rose Belle, Joe Lane, Billy Cimijotti and Harry Cimijotti.

"Menage horses. Snow, the dancing wonder, goes thru four distinct changes. Ridden by Mrs. Cimijotti.

"Presenting Victor F. Cody's Ponca Bill's Wild West and Indians, featuring Lulu B. Parr, cowgirl and lady bronk rider.

"Billy Lequett, Mary Martin, and Georgia Jones, on the ladders. The act is nicely costumed and the girls are graceful and agile.

"The prima donna, mounted in front of grandstand, sang, 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart,' with Les Klines, seated in top row of center reserves, taking up the refrain. On the elevated stage a Jap, contortion act, was presented.

"In the arena, Smith's jumping Russian wolfhounds, and in the rings, Jap wire walkers.

"Clown walkaround, featuring the crossword puzzle, the huge turtle, Milt, Woodward's snake and alligator, and Chester Sherman, the dancing clown, who is 'there' with his clever dancing.

"Reproduction of the pony express, showing how the mail was carried in the early days across the plains, relay horses, etc.

"On the stage, Capt. Tiebor's performing seals.

"It is the best troupe of seals this writer has seen; work without cues and altogether are almost human. The act closes with one of the sea lions playing America on musical instrument.

"In the rings, Matsamoka troupe in tumbling and balancing.

"In the arena, roping by Art Boden; on the stage, trick lariat spinning by Zelda Boden. Mr. Boden closes by catching four horses with one throw of the rope.

"Clown walkaround, imitation of Barnum's Zip, Mutt and Jeff, etc. Also elephant clown walkaround.

"Musical colored revue, Roger Jones and 20 people. It is a new act for a circus but it went over well, judging from applause it received. There are songs and dances.

"Georgia Jones, Zelda Boden and Mary Martin, in iron-jaw feats. A very good act.

"English fox hunt. Eight clever jumping horses are in this display.

"Charles B. Ellis' horses 'Blondy' and 'Silver.' Inez Christman, former school teacher of Eddyville, Ia., lies on the back of Blondy and Silver jumps over her. A very thrilling feat.

"High-school horses, well trained.

"A very realistic attack on the old

Covered Wagon, showing the family traveling overland, the attack by the Indians, the rescue by cowboys and hanging of traitor. Special scenery is placed over the elevated stage for this.

"The closing spec, Historic America, brings cheers and applause from the audience. It is a staging of American history from the first Americans, the Indians, the first call to defend the country, the historic ride of Paul Revere, the Spirit of 1776, etc. Gilson's band played Star Spangled Banner for the close. The usual Wild West and concert followed the big show.

"O. A. Gilson's concert band of 20 pieces furnishes the music for the circus and every member is a real musician, giving just the right kind of peppy music to aid the work of all performers and animals. And here are the folks who go to make up the personnel of the Robbins Bros. Real Circus:

"Bert Rickman is the equestrian director, to whom a great deal of credit goes for the smoothness and well-ordered arrangement of the show. Milton Robbins, manager of the side show; W. F. Harden, Annex No. 2. Cimijotti has charge of the menage horses, eight beautiful ones of his own. Victor F. Cody has his Ponca Bill's Wild West Show, with 15 people, featuring Booger Red, Jr.; Thos. Privette, roper; Tom McKinney, bronk rider; Shay Carrington, bronk rider, and Lulu B. Parr, bronk rider. Indians, Chief Lawrence, Left Hand Bull and wife, Virginia; Alfred Bone Shirt and wife, Susie; Pete Iron Shell, wife; Hannah; John Bull Man, wife, Lucy; Four Feathers, wife, Agatha; Charles Face, Eliza Cloud Man, Marine Left Hand Bull—and numerous other Indians.

(The band of 20 pieces and some 25 clowns are listed.)

"The side show lineup includes: Milton Robbins, manager; Mrs. Robbins, musical act; Cuban Mack, impalement, sword swallowing, juggling and fire eating; Princess Viola, snakes; Princess Marie, midget; Mildred Galluci, dancer; Madame Elouise, mind-reader; Texas Jack, cowboy giant; Hawaiian troupe, Charles Keawe; Tommy Arenz, Punch and Judy and magic, also inside lecturer. The band in the side show is under the direction of Prof. Joe Riggers with 8 men.

"Annex No. 2 is owned by Peggy Poole and managed by W. F. Harden.

"Moss Becker, boss candy butcher, has 14 men.

"Ed L. Brannan, general agent of the show, honored the show with his presence. It wouldn't be an opening day unless Ed was there to usher it in and be on the lot."

The show heavily advertised its daily street parade as The Parade of the Nations and the principal tableau wagons were those of the previous



Photo No. 12—South America tableau with Indians on top, Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.

season. Included were the Spellman set of 8, Great Britain, Panama, Belgium, United States, France, China, South America, and Africa (often called India or Hippo); the former Yankee Robinson air calliope and the steam calliope mounted in the old Forepaugh Lion Chariot. The great set of photos printed here picturing the units in the Parade of the Nations came originally from Bill Woodcock Sr. by way of the late Paul Van Pool and are perhaps the finest shots of the Robbins Bros. march ever to turn up.

Fred Buchanan's policy of routing his show through the farming areas of the mid-west would continue in 1926. As customary Robbins Bros. thoroughly covered its home state of Iowa, playing over 30 different cities in some 6 separate visits. Although the show was heavy with the grift in the sideshow with nuts (shell game), broads (3 card Monte), and cooch (with blowoff), evidently Buchanan was able to keep it under control so that it didn't create enough heat to reach the pages

Photo No. 13—Africa tableau (also called India or Hippo) with clown band on top, Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.



of the trade publications nor stir up the locals to the extent the show would be unable to repeat the stand under the same title the following season. A review of the Robbins routes of the mid and late 20's indicate the show repeated many dates, especially in Iowa, almost every season. Buchanan was a well respected Iowa citizen as evidenced by the attendance of the state's governor and other high officials on opening date in Perry.

Following the initial stand in Perry the show continued in Iowa with performances in Ft. Dodge, April 26, after taking off the Sunday before, which was followed by Iowa Falls, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, and Dubuque. A report in the *Billboard* said that G. W. Tremain caught Robbins Bros. at Ft. Dodge and advised that Col. Fred Buchanan has a dandy outfit which will go over big in the territory he has selected. Tremain spoke highly of the performance and equipment.

An interesting item appeared in the May 15, 1926 *Billboard* which said at the same time as the show's opening in Perry, Robbins Bros. was featured in a Pathe Newsreel running in Des Moines movie houses. The newsreel had scenes taken at the Granger quarters which pictured Drake University students frolicking with animals, including tug of war with the elephants, a race between the track team and a kangaroo, and a "football game"

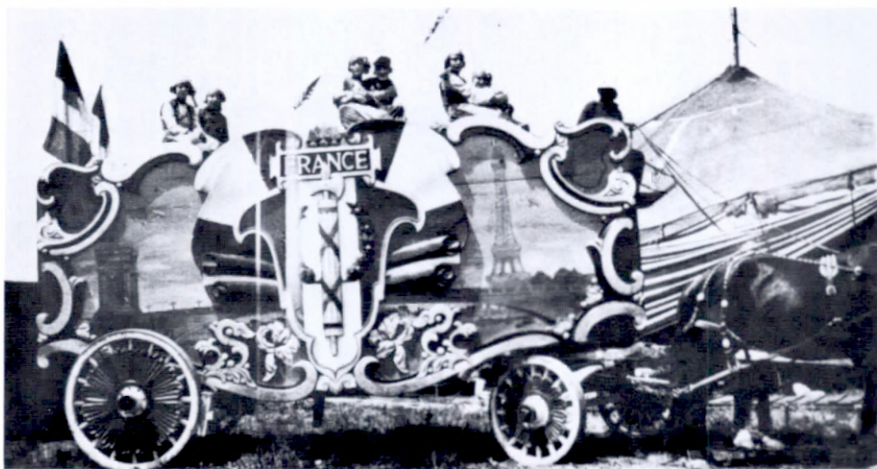


Photo No. 14—France tableau with costumed performers on top, Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Note paintings of the Arc de Triumphe and Eiffel Tower in the side panels. Joe Bradbury Collection.

between the elephants and the Drake football team. Also there was the chorus line of the Rose Marie Company dancing with the elephants. The Pathe news is to be shown nationwide and in towns ahead of the Robbins route will provide tremendous publicity.

The show moved over into Illinois May 3 to play Rock Island with Monmouth scheduled for the following day, then it returned to Iowa where it remained through its stand at Spencer, May 22. The May 22, 1926 *Billboard* said the show had received good business since its opening. Ft. Dodge, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, and Dubuque were all fine stands. Inclement weather at Iowa Falls, April 27, kept down attendance. Rock Island, Ill., May 3, under auspices of the American Legion, proved a big day. Momouth, Ill., Keokuk, Fairfield, Oskaloosa, and Marshall, all in Iowa, were excellent stands. Will Buchanan and his son, Robert, who are in advance are getting some fine publicity for the show including many front page stories and cuts. Bert Rickman, equestrian director, has the program in fine running order. Manny Gunn and wife are popular members of the show, Manny doing 24 hr. work, and his wife doing

iron jaw, swinging ladder, and menage numbers. Charles T. Ellis is producer of the Ponca Bill Wild West program and has introduced some novel ideas and Glenn Wilson, tenor soloist, is featured in the spec. Arabian Nights. (Author's note. It was customary to refer to the spec title as either Fairyland or Arabian Nights.) A new electric lighting plant and engine were installed in the new light plant wagon at Ames, Iowa, May 10, by general superintendent, Earl Sinnott. This gives the show 3 large engines which keep the entire show, midway, and grounds as light as day.

The trade publications kept the circus world well informed on the current Robbins tour of Iowa. The May 29, 1926 *Billboard* noted that the show has completed the third week of its tour in the

Photo No. 15—China tableau with costumed performers on top, Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.



home state of Iowa and business has been far below the average done in the area the past two seasons. Buchanan says this is largely because of a late Spring in this section and the several bank failures over the past couple of years. Excellent business did come at Atlantic, Iowa which has not had a circus for three years. May 13 was a red letter date—homecoming—for the Buchanan brothers. Des Moines asked the show to visit on that date and declared it Hospitality Day. The mayor issued a proclamation declaring it is the official circus day for Des Moines. Businessmen gave the show a free lot, water, and license. Cameramen of *The Register-Tribune* and *Capitol* were on the lot taking pictures to be used in regular and Sunday editions. Newton, Iowa, May 14, which had seen no circus for 3 years gave big business. Iowa City, 15th, was also an excellent stand. Other notes said that John Schultz is breaking the hippo to do a walkaround. R. M. Harvey, well-known circus general agent, was guest of Mr. Buchanan at Newton and reported he had found the eastern and southern sections of the country to be in bad shape financially this spring. Helen Morse, wife of manager James Morse, is doing some excellent riding on Major Adare.

A week later the *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. continues to encounter some bad weather and business in Iowa, however, Decorah, May 18, was very good at both performances. West Union, May 17, was the worst stand of the season so far with cold and rainy weather. Business at the matinee was okay but a heavy rain and windstorm kept down evening attendance. The mayor and county officials asked Buchanan to bring his circus back to West Union next year. Mason City, May 20, saw a good take, and Algona (21st) had the biggest afternoon crowd of the season so far plus also a fine night attendance. Spencer (22nd) was not good at all with night attendance very light. A final note said that Marceline Montague was singing the lead in the Arabian Nights spec.

After a month on the road and all but two stands played in Iowa the show moved into South Dakota with the initial stand coming at Madison on May 24. Fourteen additional dates in the state followed. The rather spotty business of the first month got better after the show entered South Dakota. The June 12, 1926 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. was now getting better business as was also Milton Robbins' side show and Peggy Poole's pit show. South Dakota dates at Madison, Mitchell, Chamberlain, Murdo, and Rapid City all gave fair to capacity houses. During this period the show also received some very good after-noon notices in the cities played by the show. Ben Mohamed who was with

John Robinson earlier in the season joined at Madison, S. D., and is being featured in the Six Blue Devils (Arabs) tumbling act. Sioux Indians on the show had a five day Pow Wow, sunrise dance, and love feast starting at West Union, Iowa, May 17. A son was born to Chief and Princess Virginia Left Hand Bull and was named Prince Buchanan Left Hand Bull. The child had been born two days earlier in Iowa City. Other notes said that Joe Fish joined at Charles City, Iowa, May 19, as boss hostler and that the show played day and date in Deadwood, S. D. May 29, with Reuben Ray's Society Circus (motorized) which was showing at the Deadwood Theater. A final item said that Ralph Noble, boss canvasman, and his crew always have the big top up and ready long before the parade returns each day.

Robbins moved over into Minnesota for a single date at Montevideo, June 5, then returned to South Dakota for Britton, Faulkton, and Eureka before moving on to North Dakota. Unfortunately, the good take during the first part of the South Dakota tour turned sour and the June 19, 1926 *Billboard* said the show's sixth week of the season was the poorest so far. Pierre, May 31, was the biggest day of the week with people seated on the ground in the afternoon and a good sized crowd at night. Huron, the next day was pretty good, and at Brookings, June 2, business was good in the afternoon but only a small crowd came out at night. There was a capacity house in the afternoon at Webster but only a fair crowd at night. Milbank, June 4 saw a good turnout at the matinee but in the evening there was a small showing. The single date in Minnesota at Montevideo was the worst stand of the week. That day general agent, Ed L. Brannon, came on for a conference with Buchanan. Other notes in the article said that the Buchanan brothers were hosts to many people at Pierre, S. D. as they once lived there as boys for seven years when their father had the leading weekly newspaper and was a power in state politics. Arthur Shinn, one of the teamsters, fell from the flat cars as the train was enroute from Murdo to Rapid City, S. D. and was badly hurt. The train was halted after the accident and Shinn was placed in one of the sleepers. Fortunately his recovery was quick and he was soon back at work. Lee McDonald, formerly with Al G. Barnes, is now steward on the Robbins show and Kenneth R. Waite has produced two new clown numbers which are going over big.

The show arrived in Britton, S. D. on Sunday morning, June 6, but a heavy wind and sandstorm made it impossible to put up the tents until 6:30 P.M. The weather conditions were not too favorable again the next day, show date, but the matinee's business was



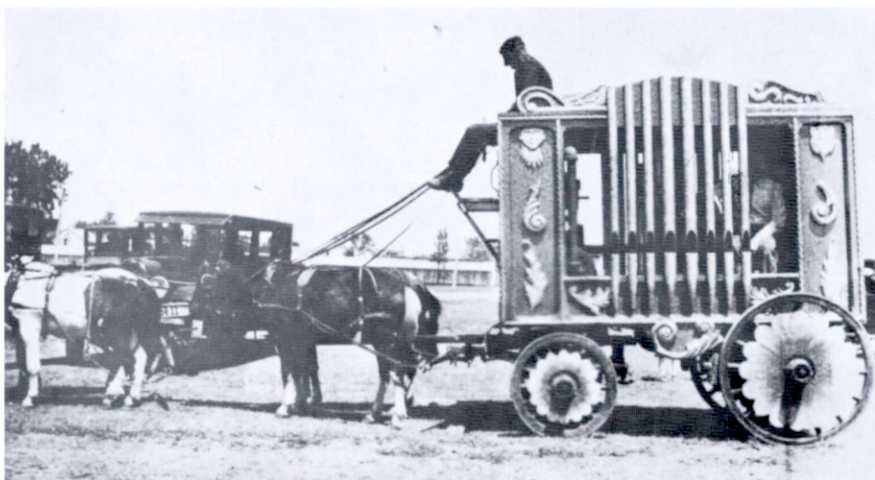
Photo No. 16—Lion cage, Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.

pretty good. No night show was given due to the long jump to Faulkton, S. D. where on June 8 the show had a big afternoon crowd and fair night house. Eureka, final date in South Dakota, June 9, was a big surprise with a huge crowd coming to the afternoon performance. An approaching wind and electrical storm caused Buchanan to order the tops taken down thus cancelling out the evening show. The train pulled out of town in a heavy wind and rainstorm enroute to the first North Dakota stand at Wishek where on June 10 it turned out to be the biggest date of the week. A great stand came next, at Bismark, the state capitol, on June 11. Three performances were given and Buchanan said as in 1924 he had broken all past records showing in the city. Local newspapers gave Robbins a wonderful afternotice. Then the show moved to Carson, N. D. for a stand scheduled for June 12. Carson

had a population of only 350 and had never seen a major circus before. Robbins played to a capacity house at the matinee but a threatening storm kept down attendance at night. While the show was in this area the troupers organized a baseball team and announced they were willing to meet teams along the route for a game.

After additional North Dakota stands at Dickinson and Beach the show moved into Montana for two dates, Miles City and Sidney, then travelled to Williston, N. D. for performances, June 18. For a period of over a week the show travelled back and forth between North Dakota and Montana until it finally headed on to Minnesota at Alexandria, June 25. The July 5, 1926 *Billboard* gave a good account of the Robbins show during this period. The article said the show had seen some cold and rainy weather during the week of June 14 but that business continued to be good. Dickinson, N. D., June 14, gave a big matinee and fine night house. The big top was filled in the afternoon at Beach, N. D., June 15, but a storm that evening caused Buchanan to shorten the performance which was well attended. There were large crowds at both shows in Miles City, Mont., June 16, but the worst

Photo No. 17—Air calliope (former Yankee Robinson), Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.



stand of the week came the following day at Sidney where there was only a fair matinee and small night house. Williston, N. D., June 18, had a capacity house in the afternoon but no night show was given on account of an approaching storm. Scobey, Mont., June 19, was one of the worst days from a weather standpoint. Business in the afternoon was only fair and no night show was given on account of a severe storm. The show was forced to find a new lot in Scobey as the contracted lot was under water. At Bainville, Mont., a Sunday date, June 20, the show experienced some stormy weather, however the big top, menagerie, and other tents were erected. No parade was given that day as the lot and surrounding roads were almost impassible. Just before the matinee was to begin a high wind pulled all stakes on the east side of the menagerie and the tent toppled over on the camels, elephants, and patrons of the show. But on account of the quick work by Lonnie Buchanan, boss canvasman Ralph Noble, supt. John Sinnott, and menagerie boss John Schultz, no one was injured. Immediately afterwards the menagerie tent was loaded and sent on to the train. The matinee had a fair sized audience but was later forced to make a hasty exit on account of another approaching storm. The big top was lowered just in time to prevent a disastrous blowdown. With all of the troubles so far the night show was cancelled. The following day at Bowbells, N. D. found the weatherman still acting up but despite rain, wind, and a hail storm the show still did good business at the matinee. Because of the threat of continued bad weather the night show was called off. Fortunately the bad weather ended and the next day at Harvey, N. D., June 22, a total of three performances were given. Two matinees saw capacity houses and there was a fine turnout at night. Valley City, N. D., the next day, experienced a turnaway at the matinee but a severe storm came up in the early evening and cancelled the night performance. The final date in North Dakota was at Fargo, June 24, and it was another big day for the Robbins show as the big top was packed for both performances.

The route now took it into Minnesota and Wisconsin for the next few weeks and during this time the circus frequently moved back and forth between the two states. A return trip to Iowa to play Clarion on July 5 was worked into the route. The take during this time was strong with many stands being the best played during the entire season.

The July 17, 1926 *Billboard* said that Robbins' business the week of June 28 was the best so far in the season. River Falls, Wis., June 28, which had not had a big circus for several years was a real winner. Mondovi, Wis. was also a

good one. A fair matinee crowd came at Menomonie, Wis., June 30, but the big top was packed that night. Red Wing, Minn., July 1, saw capacity business in the afternoon and it was also good in the evening in spite of threatening weather. Spring Valley, Minn. the next day, packed them to the ring banks at the matinee and was followed by a fair evening crowd. Austin, Minn., July 3, was tremendous at the matinee with some people actually being turned away. The night house was also strong. Other notes in the report said that Art Boden and wife, Zelda, are putting on a new roping and trick riding turn which is registering with the audience. Mose Zimmerman of Barrett & Zimmerman, St. Paul, was the guest of Mr. Buchanan for several days and sold the show 4 teams of dapple gray draft horses, 3 teams of jet blacks, and 4 spotted high school horses.

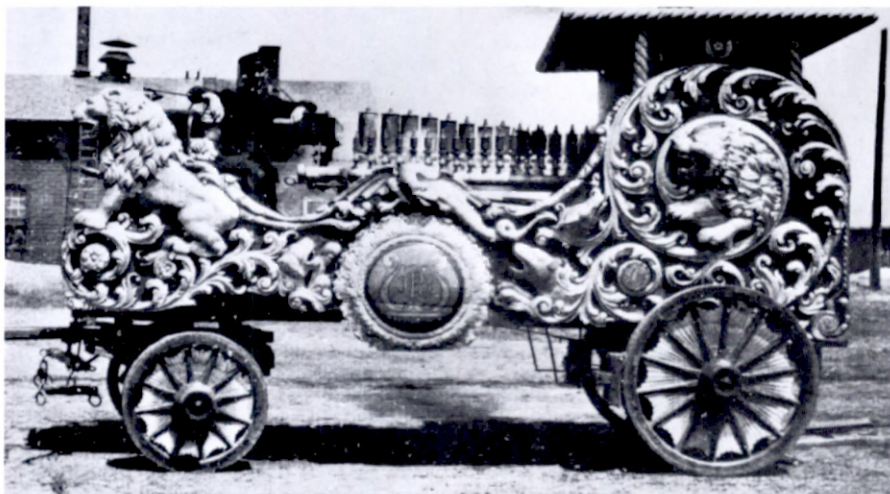


Photo No. 18—Steam calliope (old Forepaugh Lion chariot), Robbins Bros. street parade, about 1926. Joe Bradbury Collection.

The show had the closest of opposition at Green Bay, Wis. when it played the city on July 13 and Sells-Floto came in the very next day. Buchanan said he hit it lucky with Robbins Bros. and claimed the show did good business. Local observers said that Robbins Bros. got only fair business but that Sells-Floto enjoyed very good patronage. Evidently Green Bay was a town the general agents liked as the 101 Ranch Wild West Show was also booked to play there in August. Reports in the trade publications said that a few days earlier, July 8, at LaCrosse, Wis., Robbins Bros. had a good afternoon take and in the evening the big top was packed.

The final stand in Wisconsin came at Kenosha, July 14, then the show went into Illinois for a date at Elgin on the 15th. A *Billboard* reporter from the

Chicago office visited at Elgin and his account of Robbins Bros. was printed in the July 24 issue. It was headed, "ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS HAS FINE ENGAGEMENT AT ELGIN, ILL." The article went on to say that the train was several hours late getting in from Kenosha, Wis. and only the cookhouse and horse tent were up when the reporter arrived on the lot. It was 1 P.M. and wagons were just beginning to creep up from the train. It didn't look like a matinee that day to the reporter. "Certainly, there'll be a show this afternoon," said Fred Buchanan cheerfully. "Don't we always give two shows a day and lots of time three? This delay is nothing in our well-ordered lives—a mere trifle. This show is doing a dandy business."

"We had a turnaway at Kenosha yesterday and they said nice things about the show as they went out. My aim is to give the people something

they will remember when my show comes to their town next season. It is a different sort of performance from any other circus. Find out just what it is if you can. I am not going to tell anymore myself."

Such splendid parade wagons the reporter thought he had ever seen before are on the show. They are wonderful. No parade was given in Elgin owing to the lateness in arriving. Buchanan said that his parade for which he is especially equipped is one of the big assets of the show. "I count enormously on my parade," he said, "and we give one that leaves an impression. The theory I work on is that my show must be sold before the big top goes up. That must be done by the genius of the advance, by the parade, and other accompanying factors. Then I count on the natives selling the night show. And the 'different kind of performance,' about which I have already spoken will sell the show when I come back next year. There you have the whole scheme." The article continued

noting that Robbins Bros. has 3 rings and a stage, 12 elephants, better than 400 people on the show. Everything sparkles with paint and varnish, gold leaf, and clean white or brown canvas. Especially beautiful are the tableau wagons, immense and massive creations, and labeled after different countries with the particular engraved crest of each country on each wagon—Belgium, China, Great Britain, U.S.A., and other countries are thus represented. The lineup of performances—Arabian Nights is opening spectacle with Marceline Montague, prima donna. Second number is made up of riding dogs and monkeys and elephants, followed by the clown walkaround. Next appears the Matsomoto Troupe, Jap barrel act; dogs, 14 horses, clown stops, concert; wrestling and Wild West. The ladder presentation is formed of 16 performers on the swinging ladders. In succession came high jumping dogs, clown walkaround and Chester Sherman. Other incidents are the pony express, Japs, Thiebor's seals, Ponca Bill roper; colored review, Ben Mohamed's Arabs; the big iron jaw spectacle with Georgia Jones, Steel Sisters, and Zelda Boden. Hunt and jumping horses; Jap slide, covered wagon, and the closing historical presentation of America. Fred (Peggy) Poole has the No. 2 pit show. R. M. Harvey of the American Circus Corporation visited at Elgin as did Walter Gollmar of the former Gollmar Bros. Circus. General agent, Ed L. Brannon was also on hand.



One additional Illinois stand came, at Mt. Carroll the next day, then the show returned to its home state of Iowa for stands at Maquoketa, Sigourney, Washington, and Burlington. Next came a week in which the show did as was so often the custom of Robbins Bros. in those days, it played back and forth among several different states. The show returned to Illinois for Princeton and Kewanee, then back to Iowa for Mt. Pleasant, and on to Missouri for two stands, Memphis, and

Kirksville. Afterwards came another visit to Iowa and six dates.

The July 31, 1926 *Billboard* said that of late Robbins Bros. continued to receive very good business. At Sturgeon Bay, Wis., July 12, there were capacity crowds in a town that had seen no circus in several years. Again the close encounter with Sells-Floto at Green Bay was mentioned and this report said Robbins had a big matinee and turnaway at night. (Author's note. Whenever there was day and date or very close competition such as occurred at Green Bay with Robbins playing only a day ahead of Sells-Floto the respective shows always claimed to have gotten the upper hand. The opposition at Green Bay was a classic encounter between a medium sized high grass show such as Robbins and a large, big city, low grasser like Sells-Floto). Other notes in the *Billboard* story said that at Kenosha, Wis., Robbins had a capacity house in the afternoon and turnaway at night. In the town, lot contractor, Manny Gunn secured a lot in the heart of the down-

Photo No. 19—Robbins Bros. loaded flat cars at Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photos Nos. 19-26 were taken by the late Alex Irvin and given to the author some years ago. Although some in the set are not good photographically they are very important from a historical standpoint as they were actually taken during the 1926 season and picture certain Robbins equipment for which other photos are not available. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).

town area, the first time any show had ever used it. Robbins also had received good takes at Elgin, Ill., Mt. Carroll, Ill. and Maquoketa, Iowa.

The Aug. 7, 1926 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. had returned to Iowa on its route that had taken it to Montana and the Dakotas where the crop prospects were very poor. Presently the show is finding in Illinois and Iowa the best crop prospects in some years. At Sigourney, Iowa, July 19, which has not had a large circus in years, Rob-

bins Bros. had a capacity matinee and excellent crowd at night. The lot was close in to town and the parade went out early in the morning. At Washington, Iowa, July 20, there were two big crowds despite hot weather. In Burlington the following day there was a good matinee and turnaway in the evening. Illinois dates at Princeton and Kewanee as well as Mt. Pleasant, Iowa were all excellent stands. Other items in the report said that while Robbins Bros. was playing in Washington, Iowa, July 20, owner Fred Buchanan visited Hagenbeck-Wallace which was playing Fairfield, Iowa. Equestrian director Bert Rickman and musical director, O. L. Gilson have added several new musical and dance numbers to the Arabian Nights spec.

Business had been so good with Robbins Bros. for a goodly part of the 1926 season that Buchanan felt the time was right to enlarge the show and as he had in the past he decided the correct time to expand was in the middle of the season. Woodcock says Buchanan added 4 cars which included two 70 ft. Mt. Vernon steel flats, a short stock car and a coach. These additional cars brought the total in the Robbins train to 24. The show now moved on 1 advance, 5 stocks, 11 flats, and 7 coaches. Woodcock also said Buchanan sent Bob Schiller to the former Sells-Floto quarters in Denver where he bought 10 old Sells-Floto baggage wagons for the show. Woodcock remarked,

"Only 3 of these 10 reached Robbins Bros. during the 1926 season, the others were sent to the winterquarters in Granger. Those we received were a stringer wagon, a steel water tank wagon, and a baggage wagon with very fresh orange paint and black letters, 'Battle of the Flames.' Some fireworks spectacle, I guess."

"Buchanan, like Al G. Barnes and Andrew Downie, had a penchant for buying second hand show plunder along the road. I recall that when I saw the Yankee Robinson show in 1919 there was a baggage wagon on which part of the title had been blocked out, but World Toured Shows remained. Something from the J. Augustus Jones lately dispersed Cole Bros. doubtless," Woodcock concluded.

Woodcock also recalled that there was lots of room on the Robbins train after the new flats arrived and poles were left in some wagons and it looked odd to see wagons with their poles bouncing up and down when the train was in motion.

According to the *Billboard* the new flat cars coming from Mt. Vernon arrived on the show at Tarkio, Mo., August 3. In all probability the stock car, which the *Billboard* said also came from Mt. Vernon was delivered at Tarkio. Woodcock said that at a week earlier when the show was playing Kirkville, Mo. on July 27, a very large



Photo No. 20—Unloading elephants from Robbins Bros. stock cars, Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).

female elephant, named VERA, was added to the Robbins herd, coming from the William P. Hall farm at Lancaster, Mo., 25 miles up the road. Woodcock remarked,

"Later, this bull was billed as BIG BINGO, and at times displayed in the middle of the Robbins' menagerie on a low wooden platform."

The Chang Reynolds files give the following on the latest addition to the Robbins Bros.' elephant herd, now numbered at 13.

"VERA (Bingo). Purchased by William P. Hall from Overton Park Zoo, Memphis, Tenn., and leased to Fred Buchanan in 1926. She remained with Robbins Bros. through the 1931 season and afterwards returned to the Hall Farm. In 1934 she was sold by Hall to Tol Teeter for his Tol Bros. motorized show. In 1936 she was with the Joe B. Webb Circus and Wild West. She may have been on Parker & Watts in 1938 and certainly was with that show in 1939. In 1941 she was with Jimmy Hamiter. In 1943, 1944, and 1945 she was with the Arthur Bros. Circus. She died at Grand Forks, N. D. on July 11, 1945."

The Aug. 14, 1926 *Billboard* which told of the addition of the rail cars at Tarkio, Mo. also reported the week which began for Robbins Bros. at Memphis, Mo., July 26, ushered in one of excellent business. The week just concluded was also a big one. Frequent rains coupled with the best crop prospects that Missouri and Iowa have had in recent years has made farmers, townfolks, and businessmen, more than willing to spend money for amusements. The big top was filled to the ring banks in Memphis but a threatening storm kept away many at night. A heavy rain and electrical storm broke that evening just as the big top was being lowered for take down. Lightning struck one of the center poles and knocked to the ground ticket seller Walter Garland and canvasser Bugs Kelly. Neither man, fortunately, suffered any bad effects from the shock and were back on the job the next day. Kirksville, Mo., July 27, saw a capacity house in the afternoon and a

turnaway at night. Two big crowds also came at Centerville, Iowa, July 28, At Leon, Iowa, the 29th, business was good in the afternoon but only fair in the evening. During the afternoon concert a windstorm hit causing the management to ask people to leave the big top. No one was hurt as the rapid exit was made. Chariton and Knoxville, Iowa played on the final two days in July were both excellent stands.

After the date in Tarkio, Mo. the show moved into Nebraska to play Falls City and Beatrice, went on to Kansas for Horton and Ft. Scott, returned to Missouri at Carthage, Aug. 10, and then it was back to Kansas for 14 consecutive dates.

The *Billboard* continued to keep the circus world informed on how Robbins Bros. was faring and the Aug. 21, 1926 issue said the show had a turnaway at the matinee in Greenfield, Iowa, Aug. 2 plus a big night house. The same occurred the following day in Shenandoah, Iowa. Tarkio, Mo. where the new rail cars arrived unfortunately gave only a fair matinee and a small night attendance. Falls City, Neb., Aug. 5, was a darb, with the show packing them to the ringbanks at the matinee plus a big night house. Beatrice, Neb. the next day had a capacity matinee and good evening attendance. Virgil Campbell, one of the owners of the former Campbell Bros. Circus visited in Beatrice. Horton, Kan., Aug. 7, where no show had played for a few years produced only a fair matinee and a small night house. Final items in the *Billboard* account said that the parade was broadcast at Shenandoah, Iowa, as was the performance, and several of the songs sung during the show went over the air waves at Knoxville, Iowa. Visitors said there were a series of interesting races during the performance including Roman Standing with Luther Privett and Tom McKenney.

The show made a 179 mile jump from

Horton to Ft. Scott, Kan., on a Sunday run and on show date, August 9, there was a huge turnaway at the matinee and a packed house at night. The return stand in Missouri the next day at Carthage produced fairly good business while in Parsons, Kan., Aug. 11, two big crowds came out. Coffeyville, Kan. the following day gave the smallest matinee attendance of the week but a large night house showed up. A reverse of this situation came at Ottawa, Kan., Aug. 14, when the matinee had a turnaway but a light crowd at night. The *Daily Sun* in Ottawa got out special handbills which were placed on autos and in business houses announcing the time of the parade. The *Billboard* said that Doc Allman who has two motorized Jesse James shows playing the Northwest visited Buchanan at Ottawa and sold him a sleeping car which will be delivered to the show at Larned, Kan., Aug. 19. Also visiting at Ottawa was the *Billboard* reporter who had covered the Robbins opening in Perry, Iowa. She said the show was much improved since that initial stand. It was noted that this season has been exceptionally good for Robbins Bros. The stands played in Kansas so far have been most profitable. In Ft. Scott, Kan. where there was a turnaway crowd a section of the sidewall was lowered to permit more of the throng to obtain room inside the big top. A performance observation had it that Kenneth Waite has some nifty clown numbers including walkarounds that are screams.

The Sept. 4, 1926 *Billboard* continued with numerous details of the show's rather lengthy tour of Kansas. The article said the stringer, tank, and baggage wagon purchased at Denver arrived at Kinsley, Kan., Aug. 20, while other wagons went directly to the Granger quarters. A Pullman car purchased from Mt. Vernon was delivered to the show at Elkhart, Kan., Aug. 23. It was mentioned that Bob Schiller had spent several days in Denver, St. Louis, and Kansas City negotiating some of the purchases for equipment recently added to the Robbins show. Other notes said that the Robbins sideshow now has one of the finest attractions in the country—Johan Aason, the Norwegian giant, late of Hollywood where he appeared with Harold Lloyd in movies. He is 8 ft. 9½ inches in height and weighs 555. The giant joined Robbins at Lyons, Kan., Aug. 17, and the sideshow is playing to capacity crowds. The show has gone through a long, weary, string of 7, hot, sultry days with hardly a breath of air or breeze stirring to relieve both troupers and citizens suffering from the heat. Northern Kansas is burnt up from the intense heat but with a big wheat crop already

harvested the population is well pleased. Business with Robbins Bros. is far above average, but not as good as expected in accordance with the advance reports on the excellent wheat crop. Marion, Kan., Aug. 16, had a big matinee but only a fair night house the latter due to a threatening storm. An early arrival and parade in Lyons, Kan., Aug. 17, preceded a huge matinee in which hundreds were seated on the ground. The temperature was said to have registered 111 in the shade. Another threatening storm held down the night attendance in Lyons. Ness City, Kan., Aug. 18, was a very hot day. The threat of a storm resulted in only a fair matinee crowd and the evening show was cancelled out of fear of bad weather. Larned, Kan., Aug. 19, was expected to be a fine day business-wise but it didn't materialize. There was a fair matinee and light attendance at night. Kinsley, Kan., Aug. 20, was a pleasant surprise. There was a mammoth turnaway at the matinee and this was followed by a huge night house. Garden City, Kan., Aug. 21, came through with a good matinee and fine night house despite heavy opposition from Hagenbeck-Wallace, the Big Western Rodeo Co., and E. P. Jones Shows, all of which follow Robbins Bros. into the town. Robbins troupers said they had recently had the toughest week of the season from a disagreeable weather standpoint in which they had to fight the blazing Kansas heat.

It might be noted that while the show was in Kansas there were reports of two coaches being purchased by Buchanan, one from Mt. Vernon, the other from Doc Allman. If these reports are true then evidently one of the newly arrived cars was to replace an older one. In any event according to Bill Woodcock there was the addition of only one coach to the total number of such cars carried in the train. There is another *Billboard* report during this period that the show got five new animal dens but this is believed to be in error, at least there is no indication

Photo No. 21—Small tractor with Robbins Bros. baggage wagon during unloading at Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).



they were added to the show enroute. Possibly the cages were shipped to Granger for replacements or future additions. Again the lack of photographic coverage prevents a suitable check on such reports.

The show left Kansas and moved into Oklahoma for a single stand at Guymon, August 27, then proceeded immediately to Texas with the initial date coming at Dalhart on the 28th. Eight more stands in Texas followed and next came a return to Oklahoma at Frederick, September 8. Additional engagements in the state were at Elk City and Fairview and then the show went northward into Kansas to play Harper, Newton, Eureka, and Eldorado.

The Sept. 11, 1926 *Billboard* covered the Robbins tour through this area and reported that the show's 18th week of the season has gone down as one of the biggest successes Robbins Bros. ever experienced. Southern Kansas, northern Oklahoma, and Texas spots were big for owner Fred Buchanan. Ideal circus weather, wonderful wheat crops and a longing by the natives to see the sights under the white tops have been big factors in the extraordinary success of the last seven days. Elkhart, Kan., played August 23, was a most wonderful surprise and the show did a land office business there. It seemed like old time circus days as farmers and ranchers came to town early in wagons, hay racks, and every conceivable kind of motor vehicle. The matinee was a turnaway in spite of opposition from a chautauqua. A fine crowd was also on hand at night. At Dodge City, Kan., Aug. 24, the American Legion auspice was responsible for two big crowds. The Legion's 35 piece concert band led the circus parade through the downtown area at noon. It was a hot, sultry day at Pratt, Kan., Aug. 25. The lot, a mile from the city was in a plowed cornfield, the dirtiest and dustiest of the season. There was a fair matinee but better house at night. Liberal, Kan., Aug. 26, was a big day with a huge crowd on hand for the parade, and hundreds were sitting on the ground up to the ringbanks at the matinee. There was also a big night house. The first stand in Oklahoma, Guymon, Aug. 27, had a

turnaway matinee and big night crowd. Dalhart, the first stand in Texas, Aug. 28, was a disappointment. One of the smallest matinee crowds of the season showed up but a fine house was present in the evening. Other notes in the article said that Peggy Poole's pit show, Pandora, had experienced exceptionally good business in Kansas. Johan Aason, the Norwegian giant, had also been drawing good takes, according to his manager, Dick Wayne Barlow. Also sharing in the big money of late was the uptown wagon, managed by Barlow's wife, which featured the mummified body of the Oklahoma Outlaw. The attraction was drawing big business, especially in the morning hours before the parade. A final note said that Robbins Bros. played day and date with the Bee Stock Co. in Liberal, Kansas.

The Sept. 18, 1926 *Billboard* had coverage of the Robbins tour and noted the show continued to do good business in its 19th week. Although four weeks ahead of the best time for circuses to play Texas, patronage has been fine. Memphis, Texas, Aug. 30, had a capacity matinee and big night house. Amarillo, the following day, was a good one with both performances packed to capacity. Robbins Bros. played day and date with Harley Sadler's Stock Co. at Crosbyton, Texas, Sept. 3. Lubbock was a good stand with the matinee big and evening a turnaway. Lamesa, Sept. 2, had only a fair matinee due to the intense heat but the evening take was good. Poorest date of the week was at Crosbyton with a fair matinee house. No night show was given on account of an approaching storm. Plainview, Sept. 4, had a good matinee. Wind and an electrical storm held up the night performance until 8 P. M. but hundreds braved the threatening clouds to see the show.

This same *Billboard* article had a most interesting item which said that a large combined tableau and wardrobe wagon arrived on the Robbins show at

Photo No. 22—South America tableau with clown band on top in Robbins Bros. street parade, Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).



Dodge City, Kan., Aug. 24, having been purchased from Beggs Wagon Co. of Kansas City. Leonard Aylesworth is delighted with the many lockers, drawers, hangers, and electric sewing machines in the new wagon.

Just what this wagon looked like we are not able to determine. Perhaps it could have been used for parade purposes but is doubtful it was since Robbins Bros. had adequate vehicles for the daily march. Also, a completely outfitted wardrobe wagon with sewing machines etc. would not have been sent out on the parade each morning even if it was a tableau type. The Beggs photographic files give no hint as to what wagon this was. In all probability it was primarily a wardrobe wagon, equipped as described, which could have been used for parade purposes if necessary.

Other Robbins information appearing in the trade publications in late September said that the sideshow business in Texas and Oklahoma has been unusually good. Joe Riggers' Alabama Minstrels featured in the sideshow has a very strong band.

The show returned to Oklahoma at Cushing, Sept. 16, and remained in the state for 8 consecutive stands.

The Oct. 2, 1926 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. had recently been enjoying ideal weather and was doing nice business. At Newton, Kan., Sept. 13, the big top was filled for both perfoncesm A late arrival in Eureka, Kan. the next day coupled with a long haul to the lot kept attendance down at the matinee. The parade was behind schedule also. However, the big top had capacity that evening. Show officials said that Eldorado, Sept. 15, the final stand in Kansas was good, all that could be asked for. Cushing, Okla., Sept. 16, was a very good one. The *Daily Citizen* in a front page story said that Robbins Bros. was the most interesting, cleanest, and entirely different circus program ever presented in Cushing. Pauls Valley, Okla., Sept. 17, had a large matinee and capacity night house. Weather ideal and a lot located close to the heart of town were big factors in making Chickasha, Okla., Sept 18, the largest stand of the week. A final item said that Mrs. Mary Rickman in the spec was



Photo No. 24—Cage in Robbins Bros. street parade, Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. The photographer's 11 year old brother is at left standing on the running board of the family's Dodge automobile. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).

offering two new special dance numbers entitled, Beautiful Roses, and the Maiden's Dream, which are decided hits.

The Oct. 9, 1926 *Billboard* advised that Robbins Bros. was enjoying real weather and fine business currently in Oklahoma. The wild west concert has been doing an unusually good business this season. There was a fine matinee and big night house at Waurika, Sept. 20. At Duncan, Sept. 21, the "oil city," 200 people sat on the ground during the matinee and there was a turnaway at night. Fine after-noon notices followed the show. El Reno, Sept. 22, after a good matinee had even a better night house. At McAlester, Sept. 24, a capacity matinee was followed by a turnaway at night in spite of a threatening storm. Everything was loaded on the train that evening before the storm broke. Boonville, Ark., which was played the day following McAlester, had a capacity matinee and big night house. Other notes said the Matsumodo troupe of 8 Japanese is presenting some excellent aerial, contortion, balancing, and juggling acts and is one of the hits in

Photo No. 23—Hippo cage (with Miss Iowa) pulled by 6 horse hitch in Robbins Bros. street parade, Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).



the program. Tom Attaway, owner of the Red Bird Review, a tab show playing the theater at Duncan, Okla. visited Robbins Bros. the day it played the town. A new den which was built at the show's Granger, Iowa quarters was received at Waurika, Okla., Sept. 20. The 3 pumas recently purchased by Mr. Buchanan will be placed in the cage. Leo Blondin, owner of Blondin's Jesse James Show, day and dated Robbins at Seminole, Okla., Sept. 23. Charles LaMont, owner of the LaMont Circus, visited at Seminole and purchased a riding monkey from Buchanan for use on his own show.

The Arkansas tour which began at Boonville, Sept. 25, saw Robbins playing other stands in the state at Dardanelle, Paris, and Ft. Smith. The Oct. 16, 1926 *Billboard* said the show did very good business in Oklahoma and Arkansas in spite of bad weather. Dardanelle, Ark., played Sept. 27, had not had a large circus in five years. The circus dry town gave Robbins capacity business at both the afternoon and evening performances. Paris, Ark., Sept. 28, had a fine matinee and turnaway at night. Ft. Smith, Ark., Sept. 29, produced a fair matinee but had another turnaway in the evening. After Ft. Smith the show was scheduled to return to Oklahoma to play Wagoner, Sept. 30, but after looking over the city park lot where the circus was to play and finding it covered with four inches of water due to recent rains and being unable to find another location, manager Buchanan decided just to pass up the stand. Business the following day in Bristow, Okla., was good but at Holdenville, Okla., Oct. 2, business was just fair in the afternoon but big at night. Final notes said that the domestic animal acts of Kate and Tom Smith are among the big hits of the performance. While at Ft. Smith, Ark., the show purchased a zebra and two elephants from W. A. (Snake) King.

Bill Woodcock Sr. wrote Chang Reynolds about the two elephants Robbins Bros. received from Snake King as follows.

"Robbins Bros. received two small elephants and a baby zebra from W. A. (Snake) King at Ft. Smith, Ark., September 29, 1926. They arrived in a

TWO YEARS UNDER THE BIG TOP

By Bert D. Alton

By winter of 1915 there seemed definite need in our family for the eldest to leave school and become an earner. Being the firstborn, it therefore devolved upon the writer to attempt this transition, though the marketable skills of an eighteen-year-old may be limited; and mine were thin and doubtful indeed!

However, an application directed to one Ed A. Woeckener bandmaster with the Al G. Barnes Wild Animal Circus (at their winter quarters in Venice, California, where it was making ready for the on-coming road season) stressed some supposed ability with certain musical instruments and a desire to join the troupe as a bandsman.

To my delight I received in reply an invitation to appear at the Venice winter quarters and try out! I therefore made a singing voyage south from Frisco to L. A. on the steamer YALE (Cost me \$15.00) presenting myself most promptly and eagerly in reply. My delight, I recall, was short-lived; for my inability to keep up with this fast-stepping and experienced bunch of professionals soon became painfully evident. The director indicated that if I switched to "peck horn" (alto) an instrument emphasizing hopefully harmonious afterbeats, and would faithfully resort to "woodshedding" the proposed musical scores for a couple of weeks prior to opening date, I might hopefully be considered a member of the troupe. So to this program I zealously applied myself.

Our opening exhibition in that year of 1915 was given in Oxnard, California; and although bills were up around town and the public was invited at usual admission fees, I believe as many job applicants attended this first performance as did paid admissions. Certainly when the route cards were passed to personnel, they listed the following Friday and Saturday in Los Angeles as opening days and dates, and our dubious performance in Oxnard as a dress rehearsal!

An inviolate rule of our management as to days and dates of performance was "never on Sunday" — and I have a dreary memory of that first Sunday on the road as being one of lonely desolation. It was spent in Lancaster, California, which was in 1915 little more than a small R.R. junction and just over the hill from L.A., — and on the desert!

However, when doors opened that Monday afternoon, we played to a good



Al G. Barnes (George Stonehouse) is pictured on the right, his wife, Mrs. Dolly Barnes is standing. On the left is Barnes brother Albert T. Stonehouse, who used the name Capt. Stonewall when presenting his seal act. Albert Stonehouse was the author's grandfather. All photos are from the author's collection.

and profitable house and an even better one that evening.

I have often heard it said that the ability to pick 'tanks' (small railroad towns with gate potential) that were being overlooked by other big R.R. shows, and turning them into areas of great potential, was one of Al G.'s main success attributes. A sort of "git there fustest with the mostest" principle. He well knew that the arrival about dawn of our sparkling train of 25 or 28 cars in red, blue and glistening gold leaf splendor would stir comment at every breakfast table that the news reached, in a town of ten to twenty thousand, and would cause a stir of excitement in a metropolis of any size.

Often, an unbelievable number of small-town people of all ages and classes would wait at the R.R. yards or "runs" for a first glimpse of the circus as it arrived. First behind the engine

came the "flats" on which were chocked the animal cages with their precious cargo. They were spotted immediately and nearest the lot for early and safe delivery there. Then as near as possible were set the stock cars containing our faithful draft animals — horses, of course, and "bulls", as the elephants were called, and without which patient and powerful sloggers we would have been unable to move our heavy equipment either onto or off many lots, especially in wet or heavy weather. We had, in addition, of course, our steam-driven trucks and power motor driven vehicles, but it was surprising how many places we got into where they were not only useless but had themselves to be extricated by those faithful and powerful bulls.

Then at a near-by available siding were set the "prop" cars containing such physical properties as the "big top" and other canvas. One car I remember was devoted to the cook shack — tent, tables and ware, ranges, refrigerators, etc. It was directed and provisioned by one Charley Davis, who developed a reputation as the best steward, running the greatest cook shack on the road.

Several cars were devoted to the transport of our sea of canvas which included, besides the "Big Top", the menagerie tent, the "pad" room (or dressing tent) where we daily found our trunks and water pails lined up in prescribed order and with canvas partition between men's and women's premises, the smaller sideshow tents, six to ten of these fronting the midway on either side.

The "office" where the money and records were kept was a staunch wagon spotted in the front area where full view might be had of midway and front gate!

Then there were the various coaches for human cargo, the band car, the chicken band car (We had a girls' band for parade and sideshow purposes.), the performers' car, the married folks' car and, somewhere farther forward (hopefully) the "Crum" cars — those inhabited by the canvasmen and other property laborers but named for the parasitic vermin too often present which were referred to lightly as "crums", and which were almost constantly under fumigation.

Near the rear was the one common meeting place aboard train, known as the privilege car, where one might



The Al G. Barnes Circus train rounding a curve near San Francisco, Ca., around 1915.

repair on the long or short hauls and while away some hours with games such as blackjack, keno, and stud. Coffee was always on the range. It, and a limited assortment of pastries might be had in exchange for our "dookies". These were small coupon books issued by the management and available here and at the box office through the simple procedure of drawing them as an advance against future salary. They could be used at the gaming tables also. The privilege car was a place of common meeting and very generally resorted to by those above the labor echelon.

Last, but certainly not least in importance, came "Al G's" private car which he rode in stately elegance when en route. It consisted, as I remember, of two commodious living apartments to accommodate two, four, or six persons each, a dining area with kitchen and pantry, and an impressive observation platform at the rear. One of these compartments was occupied by Cap't Albert and Theresa (Stonewall) Stonehouse, Al G's brother and sister-in-law. They were the writer's maternal grandparents, she, functioning as treasurer and he, a dean of sea lion trainers.

In the performers' car travelled such luminaries as Louie Roth, lion trainer; Mabel Stark, tigers; Martha Florine, leopards; Bill Tafe, dean of clowns; Boogie Red, wild west; as well as Fred Fulton, "The Pale Plasterer from

Minneapolis" — the then world's heavyweight boxing "champ."

We proceeded northward aboard this city on wheels through the San Joaquin valley in a successful sweep of the "tanks" to wind up with a Saturday showing in the rather rough little state capitol of Sacramento, and to face a long weekend jump over the Donner Pass. The disappointment was general at our early Sunday departure from Sacramento, but for disparate reasons. As a "First of May" my regret was mellowed by keen anticipation of the trip in broad daylight over the legendary Donner Pass. It became apparent that for the "old troupers" regret was predominately at leaving the famous bars and bistros of Sac'to for a weekend train ride — and the privilege car!

We played to good houses in Reno and Carson City, Nevada, and when we pulled into Fallon we had no reason to believe that any but our usual good fortune awaited. However, adjacent to this town was a quite populous Indian reservation (Blackfoot, I was told) and it appeared to us that morning as we left the "runs" on our trek to the lot where we were to "put up" and per-

The sideshow band is pictured on cage No. 29 in a Barnes parade in Newport, Wash., July 16, 1915.



form, that the town had been taken over by the Indian population.

We were told by the "towners" that the Indians had learned of our date for local showing (our bill boards were all over town) but that they were taking no chance on our slipping into town and away prematurely. They had been arriving for a week and had the town surrounded with their campsites and wagons. And sure enough they formed an early line at the box office, storming in at the instant of opening and filling "blues" and reserved seats to near capacity. By show time they outnumbered the whites five-to-one. We had a full house with a large crowd of both segments still waiting at the front gate. Word was passed up to the stand that we would "railroad", that is, shorten each act by half in order to accomplish a second matinee and accommodate the waiting populace outside.

We in the bandstand who were sharply put to it to follow musically the abbreviated acts became aware of an atmosphere of tension and change and were bothered by a rising gusty wind disturbing our music folios. My rack was tipped into my lap and while I struggled to save my score the bandsman in the next chair leaned over and rasped in my ear, "Look, the Indians are all leaving!" And so they were. The same people who had fought so hard to be first-seated were now, as with one accord, making for the exits. I'll not say that all the white citizenry remained seated, but I saw none leave.

Meanwhile, the aerial lion act was in progress and Leo (remember him as the symbol of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer?) had reached the zenith of his ride to the top of the tent and was showing all the symptoms of a nervous cat quite out of his element and wanting more than anything else "down." The worried property men were struggling with block and tackle to accommodate him. As I gazed aloft fascinated, the "big top" ballooned skyward and we could hear stakes popping out and guy lines straining under the stress of effort to hold down this landlocked dirigible of canvas. When the nearest center pole lifted and crashed upon the steel arena, director Woeckener jumped from his stand shouting, "Blowdown! Under the bear cages, men! Head for the cages!"

It was merely a matter of steps to gain this refuge since the bandstand backed up against the cages. And animal cages have nearly the same strength and stability of small flatcars, and beneath them was probably as safe a place as one might find in a blowdown, or even a tornado.

At this point the big top was a dusty maelstrom of threshing tent poles, stakes and collapsing seat sections. Spectators dashed in all directions and one bewildered townswoman ran

screaming to and fro along our cage line of refuge until one bandsman pulled her under his cage beside himself.

The wind subsided as suddenly as it arose, leaving us to our lone and tattered misery and effectively concluding our only attempt to perform in Fallon, though some of the locals were eager to have us try. Actually, there was too much damage to the "top" for the purpose, and though much was lost in the way of props and costumes, some was found snagged in trees in a grove two miles across the prairie. Thanks to the Indians the loss was all material and practically none personal. We were again fortunate, though not for long.

It was axiomatic around the lot, that "time, tide and circus wait for no man" and we were billed to open on Monday of the following week in Susanville, a new and remote town back across the state line in California's north interior, and as yet untried by the major R.R. shows because of inaccessibility. Again we would utilize the weekend for a long hard pull up a new road into a primitive, high area set between two immense lakes, and I believe the company was unanimous in anticipation of a venture into this virgin territory.

However, as our heavy train labored upgrade over this line of recent construction, the rails spread and the engine and first two flats were grounded. We found ourselves marooned for the day on a desert of desolation worse than Lancaster.

It was late that night before the wrecker succeeded in setting us back on trackage and we found ourselves heading sadly back to California's chain of coastal cities.

It was about this time that opportunity knocked, though faintly, at the door of the narrator. Becoming increasingly bored with the drudgery of that everlasting peck-horn I'd had thrown at me, I provided myself with a



Jerry Barnes (Stonehouse) a half brother of Al G. and Albert Stonehouse is shown astride a horse in a Barnes parade around 1916.

pair of drumsticks and began surreptitiously practicing rolls, flams and beats when alone, and when any suitable surface was available.

Our bandmaster Woeckener, a trooper of the old school, had a faculty of knowing how to gather about him the type of rough and ready musician who could "cut" the music in true circus fashion, and who were always "with it". In his words, "You gotta show up on time and sober for every performance. Miss one and you're docked; miss two and you're through! Show up drunk once and you've had it!"

I observed only two instances of

The big show band wagon ready to leave the lot of the Al G. Barnes Circus around 1913. The big open wagon behind the pony wagon on the right is a pit show at the front of the midway.

violation of the sobriety rule. The first affected my own career and remains indelibly inscribed on my memory. Our snare drummer, Charley Roberts, was a performer of nearly flawless perfection and exquisite technique. He never missed a cue. His rolls were feathery lace and I used to observe him in covert fascination. It seemed he rarely had need of his score except in concert work, and there he was immense and always precise.

But he was bored! And he was sober; neither condition to his liking. So when we doubled back for Auburn — next stand — he left the train in Sacramento and had a private celebration to make up for the one he felt he'd previously missed. That afternoon in Auburn we were without a snare in the pre-show concert, in the matinee, and in the evening street ballyhoo as well. We really missed old Charley in the grand entry, but when we turned into the stand for the evening's grind, there he was in his usual place, trying to appear unconcerned and as if he'd been with it through the whole day.





The pull away team is pictured at the runs of the Barnes show around 1915.

Avoiding the director's outraged glares he essayed the program as if nothing had happened. But that was not the way he sounded. He had not allowed enough time for sobering and his beats were imprecise, his roll had lost its magic and he missed cues. He seemed sometimes unsure as to what score was up.

After twenty minutes of this, Woeckener turned at a pause, and pointing his wand at the drunk he said, "If you think that you can find your way out to the office you can go now and draw your time. Then get your props, because you won't be aboard the train tonight." Charley faded. But as we continued, the program developed a limp. Without Chuck's feathery roll every musical hold and chord seemed thin and weak, and we began to get reproachful stares from the performers. At mid-show pause Ed turned to the group and asked hopefully, "Is there anyone who can hit that snare?" No one volunteered, so I raised my hand.

Woeckener regarded me with dubious surprise. "You, drum?" he asked. I said I'd try, and with a look of doubtful apprehension he waved me to the drummer's chair. It may have been luck, and I admit to some faking, but actually I had been a close observer of old Charley for some time and I fell quite naturally into the routine.

Now with some inner satisfaction I observed the director's surprise at my ability to make the cues and follow the score. But my test was coming up — the monkey slide.

At this point there was a suspension of other ring activities. A simian climbed a center pole opposite the reserves, and gaining the top, he grasped a pulley suspended on a cable slanting to the ground at the far end of the tent. Jumping off he slid down nearly the full length of the big top, gathering momentum as he went and disengaging himself with the ease of a

practiced trainman just before he hit the ground anchor.

This feat was always accompanied by a thin drum roll at the top which gathered volume and crescendo as the speed increased and with a crash of cymbals at the bottom. I had long been intrigued with this effect and I did my best to imitate it. And I was rewarded when Woeckener turned and looked at me saying, "OK! You're the drummer!"

Trouping life now began to acquire a rosier hue, and for me the matter of going to bed in one town and waking up in another each morning was of intriguing interest. We learned that we were again essaying a new and untried area. The bustling and sizable city of Eureka had until this time depended entirely on its fine port and good highways for outside communication and had therefore never hosted a railroad show. Recently there had been an extension of the coastline railroad in, and we were to have the opening date in this virgin spot, and it turned out to be a most memorable occasion from start to finish.

Immediately upon pulling into the yard in the dawn we were awakened by the tumult in the streets. Peering out the car windows we found we were surrounded. These people, many of whom had lived in the area all their lives, and without benefit of travel, had knowledge only of their local animals, domestic and wild. Lions, tigers, elephants, camels, zebras and giraffes were creatures of which they had only read and heard. And no less intrigued were they at sight of the flashy train. It soon became apparent we were to be boarded; they had never seen show people either!

They came aboard our sleepers and down the aisles, thrusting aside our drapes and peering into bunks and berths and apartments with open mouths. To them we were all on display.

Although we arrived at dawn the streets were already lined from the runs to the lot where the crew was having real difficulty "putting up"



Albert Stonehouse with one of his sea lions presented on the Al G. Barnes Circus.

because of the press of townspeople. And no sooner was canvas up than clamor arose at the front gate for admission!

Circus before breakfast? A short conference was held and it was decided that we would railroad our breakfast, give a short parade, get the doors open before noon and give an early show for the benefit of the eager beavers in addition to the programmed matinee and evening show.

I still can't see why we bothered with a parade, for when we returned we could hardly find room to spot the wagons for the crowd. We lunched on the run and threw doors open. Immediately we were filled to capacity. So we railroaded and had doors open for an early full capacity matinee. There were always more waiting than we could accommodate, so we crowded in a third performance that afternoon. We opened for an early night performance and a second, so that it was near midnight when we wrapped it up, having given five complete performances. Still people were waiting who had to make do with sideshows.

Five "turn-aways" in one day. If this is not a record, it must be close. And to management this represented nearly a week of good gates without the moving costs. Did we all get a bonus? No.

Our course was now fixed in a northerly direction playing most of the towns of the Pacific northwest, including those on the Puget Sound. It was in one of these perched in the hills at the edge of the water with streets slanting steeply seaward that we had a problem keeping our parade rigs from launching themselves into the sea.

Our number one bandwagon was one of the heaviest rigs on the lot, and the tallest, an impressive sight moving grandly down a street behind its eight-horse team of noble draft animals. And the skinner was an expert, a matter of constant comfort to us bandmen

perched atop this swaying leviathan.

Today, however, he was disturbed because his helper was absent — the man on whom he depended for braking power and extra beef on pull-ups, etc.

This town was built in a narrow crescent among the hills reaching into the Sound. Our skinner did a perfect job with those sixteen reins — eight in hand, and providing his own braking power besides . . . until we came to the last turn at the top of a grade looking straight down into the Sound with a sharp turn at the bottom.

Our driver pulled up while we all peered down that awesome reach and he turned to us. "Fellows," said he, "this is the one I've been dreading. This is a steep pitch and that's a sharp turn down at the bottom. If we get to going too fast for the turn we're going right out there into the drink." A pause. Then: "Guess I don't need to remind you, if we make the turn, everybody to the port side so we don't turn it over."

With that he gently eased downgrade while we clung to our lofty perches in terror. One of our fellows added his weight to the brake, with the driver's. The powerful wheel horses dug in, braced their shoulders and did their best to hold; but it was too much weight. The grade was too steep and we were gaining velocity at an alarming rate when the mounted parade marshal and his assistant saw our predicament. He came charging in to grasp bridles of lead horses on either side; and with this combined effort we were able to cut and negotiate the sharp turn at the bottom — and stay upright and on dry land.

We now made our way across the reaches of the cascades into north central Washington and Idaho, proceeding south through the latter state until we found ourselves in the quaint, small town of Payette. Here we put up at the edge of town. An outlying residence adjoined our lot and it turned out to be the home of a young man, a recent high school graduate with a trombone and a wanderlust. He watched the put-up from start to completion, saw the parade line up and pull away to town where he listened from various vantage points. What he saw and heard intrigued him and he approached our director with a request to join the troupe.

Woekener made some local inquiry, and he confided to the group now that he was impressed with a new applicant whose local referral had replied to inquiry, "Who, Paul Maule? The best trombone player in the state of Idaho!" He was to sit in with us that afternoon and evening, which he did, and showed up some of our skeptical old troupers. All sight-reading yet! He was hired and aboard the train when we pulled out of Payette that night.

So that is how Paul David Maule joined the trick. We now had a new

"first-of-May". He was promptly dubbed "Pall Mall". He and I soon became close chums. We invested what spare time was allowed us an investigation of local and historic sites wherever we went. We swam in every available lake or stream, icy or warm; if there was anything for which a region was famous we did our best with what time we had to investigate, an interest which soon earned us the ultimate degradation of being referred to as "tourists". Paul Maule and I enjoyed our association for the rest of the season and on through 1916. After I left at the end of 1916 he joined the big one, Barnum and Bailey.



Eddie Woekener and his twenty-two piece band posed for this photo in front of the Al G. Barnes Circus marquee in 1913. Woekener was band master on the Barnes show for many years.

When the first World War engulfed us he joined the Navy as bandsman and being stationed at Mare Island he was a regular visitor at our home in Oakland. He left the road to become a lumberman in his old home of Payette where Thetis and I visited him in 1966 with our granddaughter Linda, and were entertained at his mountain lake cabin. Hopefully he still holds forth — with his faithful sliphorn — and still plays with the Shrine Band.

We now headed north through western and middle western states on an easterly course that took us as far as New York. It was about this time that the equestrian director, King, approached me with an inquiry as to my riding ability saying he had a spot for me in the "manage" act.

"You do ride?" a gentle inflection in his voice.

"Oh, sure." And I told him of my farm upbringing. I had ridden everything on the ranch.

But he was definitely unimpressed. "That's all right," said he reassuring-

ly, "I can make a rider of you in an hour's time."

As I recollect, this proved to be a somewhat overoptimistic assessment; but he was a thorough horseman and a good teacher. The basics I learned from him stayed with me through life.

When he introduced me to my mount it turned out to be a young silver-colored gelding of good conformation and somewhat more than his share of spunk and spirited mischief. These characteristics King explained to me while Silver and I listened attentively — though sneeringly on Silver's part. Then King mounted and demonstrated the cues used to put the animal through

his routine and it was amazing the cooperation he got from that patently unwilling cayuse, and the impressively beautiful action accomplished!

"Now," said King, turning him to face the reserves, "This is where he stars. He does the best 'kooch' of anything on the lot, including the girls in the sideshow tent. There are five dancing horses in the line and he has the center, and deserves it, when he's working right. Watch closely." King uttered a coo of encouragement and began raking the horse gently from shoulder to thigh with alternate heels at the same time tickling his rump with his quirt on first one side and then the other. Then that little animal, after a protesting snort or two, placed his front hoofs solidly together, at the same time lifting his rear feet alternately and daintily causing his whole haunch and buttocks to swing and sway in extraordinary undulations. King kept him on this routine for over two minutes before pulling him up with a bow, and rewarding him with a grateful and affectionate pat.

"When he's working like that" said he appreciatively, "believe me, the seats go crazy." Then dismounting, "OK, he's all yours. Make him work." How simple. I'll not go into the hours

that Silver and I spent together to achieve this entente. Suffice to say that we managed in every phase but his dance. That dance he purely hated. It ill became his equine dignity to do this mincing step. I took to cueing him early. He would snort and shake his head in protest, but when he finally broke into his routine we could always be sure of an appreciative hand from the audience. But each day he stalled longer and more obstinately until the day came that we had to exit without his dance! King met us at the padroom door.

"Well, he finally blew it," he said. "I'll have him saddled at four-thirty and you two can woodshed it between shows." So Silver and I found ourselves alone that afternoon under the deserted big top, but at our usual spot for his hippodrome dance — which he simply refused to do. For forty-five minutes I cued him and coaxed him, whipped him and raked him until he stood in a puddle of his own lather before he finally came around and broke into his usual dance routine. Then I took him to his stall for his rations and rest (R&R).

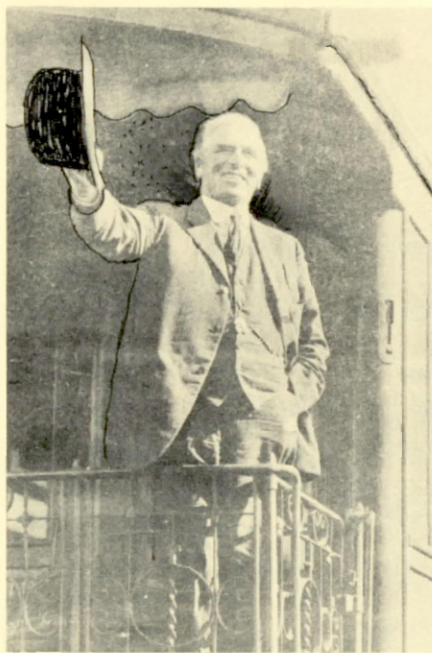
I wish I could say that we never had this to do over, but the fact is, Silver would perform almost flawlessly for weeks and then suddenly decide that the dance was beneath his dignity. He would balk, and we would have painfully and laboriously to take time out to reach a new understanding.

It was about this time that Al G's plan for expansion from a three ring operation to four became a fact to adjust to, and Grandad divided his little troupe of Sea Lions, so that I was appointed to work mine in ring number four while he worked out his routine in number one. This meant another absence from the band stand for me and a couple of quick costume changes before resuming my seat there after each turn in the ring.

One day in rural New York state I stopped at a village general store in quest of a new riding whip. Locating, and leisurely turning the whip wheel I selected one with rawhide core and suitable action and looked about for someone to accept my money. I prowled, intrigued with the vintage wares displayed, and noting a high-top desk in a corner I approached and peered over. Here, concealed and quite absorbed in the business of polishing something on a handkerchief spread on his knee, sat a character I took to be the store keeper. I displayed the whip I had selected and inquired as to price. If he heard me there was no indication; and I was about to repeat, when his hand came slowly to rest, and leaning back, he squinted at me over the top of his specs.

"Be you with that there circus?" he inquired.

"Yes," I admitted.



Al G. Barnes at the rear of his private car on the circus train.

"Well," said he, displaying the object of his industry — a small nicked star labeled DEPUTY. "Do you reckon they'll honor this down to the front gate?"

On our first Sunday layover in this area, Pall Mall and I felt inspired to go abroad. We could hardly wait to cross the border into Canada, so we took a side trip to Niagara where we viewed the falls first from the American, and then from the Canadian side. Pall Mall was restive and said he wanted to return to the American side at once. Said he just wanted to be able to tell people he'd been to Canada and couldn't stand it for more than an hour.

We now found ourselves on a westward course toward the Mississippi River. We played some gracious little towns along the river, among them New Iberia, Louisiana, famous as the home of the original and still popular McIlhenny's "Tobasco" sauce. Here we set up big top and tents near the parish courthouse grounds surrounded by venerable moss-covered live oaks.

I remember being told as we sat at breakfast in the cookshack, that the extended limb of the oak above our table was the "hanging" tree serving the courthouse jail next door, — and still in use since they had never expended for a gallows in that parish.

Here it was, along the River, that I tasted my first raw oyster and here the towners made holiday of circus day, and the colored folks erected gaudy bunting stands along adjacent streets, offering show-bound citizens lunches of "fried shoate and fried chicken, — hot!" A shoate, I learned, was a young

pig, and for modest pence one might have a sizzling portion on a slice of "braid."

We played many picturesque and interesting towns along the River as far south as New Orleans before we again pointed west for the coast.

My original boundary crossing experience had been at El Paso, Texas. We had a Sunday there just after the insurgent Pancho Villa had vanquished the Federalistas and made his bid to push the border northward. His rag-tag army was camped along the Rio Grande and things were in general turmoil in Juarez just across the river. I had been warned that crossing over at this time under these conditions involved certain risks and therefore resolved to make discretion the better part of valor and to stay safely on our own side. I could not, however, resist wandering down to the bridge and looking across. As I looked, I observed an El Paso streetcar cross the bridge bound for Juarez, and upon inquiry learned that there existed a scheduled traction loop between the two cities. One might board in El Paso, stay aboard through Juarez and return without leaving the car. So, I caught the next car, exhilarated at the thought of how simply and safely my first trip abroad might be accomplished. It was a pay-as-you-enter operation, and I was last in line; so that we were across the boundary and in Mexico when I tendered a ten-peso bill, which someone had given me, in payment of fare. It was accepted without comment by the conductor who dropped it in an open basket on the floor and motioned me on.

"Don't I get any change?" I asked.

"Change?" he exploded, in evident surprise. "Do you want change?" I admitted that I expected some out of a ten; and he turned and reached me a double handful from the basket, the which I stowed in my hat and headed for a seat.

We now slowed to our first stop on the Juarez side and were boarded at once by a motley and noisy group who filled us to capacity, all remaining seats and standing room. Into the seat next to me dropped a citizen of grizzled and untidy appearance who rode only to the next stop and then suddenly arose and began pushing for the exit. At this moment the conductor called out, "Who lost a pocketbook?" Instinctively I felt for mine — it was gone, and I raised my hand, shouting, "I did!"

"Well, there goes the so and so who's got it," said the conductor, pointing to my erstwhile seatmate who was pressing for the exit; and I jumped instinctively and grasped him by the shoulders. To my surprise he stopped and instantly raised his hands to be searched, a matter which I accomplished to the best of my ability, but without result.

When he had left the car, which he did at once, the conductor informed me that this character caught and boarded every car he was able to as it crossed the bridge, and disembarked only when he had accomplished his purpose of lifting someone's wallet and that he, (the conductor) had made it a rule to announce the matter each time just as he would the next stop or street. A few wallets had even been recovered thereby.

Fellow passengers said they had observed him pass something on to another just as I intercepted him; and I never saw my wallet again. It has always been a matter of chagrin to me to have been thus victimized within minutes of my first departure from my native heath. And though I returned across to the U.S.A. that day a chastened chap, it would be wrong to say I was broke. I still had a hatful of Mexican specie, with which I consoled myself and sent home to family and friends as souvenirs stuffed in letters written on my pad room trunk 'tween shows.

Only a few days now remained of the current season of parades, performances and of Grand Entries around the hippodrome. It seems appropriate here to mention the strident vehicle which always imposed itself at the end of every such spectacle, the steam calliope, and to speak of its gentle operator whom we'll call Mrs. Smith. A quiet, unassuming and meek little lady, she seemed an unlikely candidate for her job, but she performed it in masterful fashion. She could coax sounds from this brazen behemoth which passed as music — at a suitable distance. She stuffed cotton in her own ears.

Mrs. Smith had two consuming interests to console her. She loved to "crosh-uh" (crochet), and she idolized her arrogant pip-squeak spouse. Early in the season she essayed a serious project, the creation with her crochet hook, of a king-sized bedspread of many colors and of intricate design. She spent most of her leisure hours thus occupied. Her industry became a matter of gossip and of prideful interest to her fellow troopers who laid bets as to the work's date of completion. Her husband, on whom she seemed to dote, was a large-mouthed braggart, a sort of Jack-of-all trades, a roust-about who couldn't fit in and whose very presence aboard the train and around the lot was endured in sufferance to her.

Because of a tall tale he would eagerly spin to win with patience to listen, he had earned the dubious sobriquet of "The Great Unchokeable." Weasly and wiry rooster that he was, he bragged of having once met the great Frank Gotch, a former world's wrestling champ, on equal terms, and to the latter's discomfort.

This Gotch had, in the memory of



Martha Florine, who presented a leopard act, is shown in the cookhouse of the Al G. Barnes Circus.

older sports fans, stumped the country taking on all challengers and would wind up his exhibitions by sitting on the floor in a corner of the ring while the announcer offered a bag of gold to any person, "man, woman or child" who would step into the ring and succeed with his bare hands in throttling the supine and unresisting gladiator. As no record exists of the Great Gotch ever having parted with a dollar as the result of this challenge, the average inexperienced listener would, at this point, blurt as I did, "And are you telling me that you succeeded?"

"Hell, no," he'd answer, disdainfully. "Couldn't nobody choke that ox. He knew the trick, — but I do, too. So I just challenged him right back, — winner take all! An y' know, that feller just worked himself to a frazzle before he give in. And I walked away with the swag." If his listener's face then betrayed some doubt or disbelief at this conclusion he would tense his neck muscles 'til the cords stood out like fiddle strings, by way of demonstration of his technique, holding his breath 'til he was as red as a lobster, and the average listener would yield the point in apprehension.

One of this non-pareil's first duties of the morning was to stoke the calliope's firebox and develop a head of steam for the parade. On one sad morning near season's end his patient and industrious wife sat at her console awaiting his tardy effort to get up pressure. She had brought her crocheting with her. It was a bulky bundle and nearly finished; but, with little time remaining, she had resolved to complete her project before season's end. She now tenderly unfolded her work hoping to accomplish a few stitches while waiting.

This calm acceptance of a sticky situation seemed to infuriate her tardy and irascible spouse. He reached into the cab, gathering her bulky bundle in his arms and heaved it into the firebox. When her fellow troopers learned of this monstrous vandalism, talk was had of lynching. Out of consideration

for her he was allowed to live.

We played many picturesque and interesting towns along the Mississippi before we again pointed west for the coast, then trending north through the Imperial Valley, through the Pass and Beaumont and Banning, we played San Bernardino in southern California. Thus I had my first view of the fair valley, which would sometime be our home and later assume so large a part in the lives of all the family.

As we now approached the season's end we found ourselves in the San Francisco bay area and a part of each day's delight was to greet old friends and family. One day on parade in Richmond, I espied from my perch on the band wagon a familiar group of eager youngsters, including my sister, Bee, and a young lady I had known and admired through my Oakland school days. When we returned to the lot, sister Bee, her chum, Thetis, and my closest boyhood chum, Emil Schaegele, were there waiting. We had a great visit and laid plans to attend the "Fair" together (Panama Pacific International Exposition) in San Francisco the next weekend.

After seeing them seated in the reserves I returned to the front gate to perceive another acquaintance in the person of Thetis' uncle, Miles Standish. He was in an apprehensive and somewhat militant mood, having heard that his favorite niece had gone to the lot to meet some guy with the circus. I believe he was reassured only when he found her to be seated with her group enjoying the show. He and I later became great friends and often laughed about his 'Richmond Rescue'.

Early on the following Sunday our little foursome boarded the Key Route Ferry from Oakland. We crossed the bay in the bright morning hours and did not return until the ensuing wee ones. We had spent the day at the Fair. We had heard Sousa's band. And Thetis had tried to spend some weird foreign money which had been sent to her from El Paso.

As I returned to the lot on Monday I could hear the throaty tones of Smith's calliope; and on the midway, candy-butcher Charley Hotts' famous pitch, "No peanuts - no sur-kiss! No peanuts - no sur-kiss!"



Photo No. 26—Steam calliope (old Forepaugh Lion Chariot) pulled by truck in Robbins Bros. street parade, Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).

baggage car which was hooked to the Robbins train and hauled to the next stand at Wagoner, Okla. The lot was under water at Wagoner and the show did not unload, but we took the bulls out of the baggage car and loaded them in the Robbins bull car, and it required a whole day to do so.

"The bulls were in crates, and were the wildest two punks I ever saw. We had to drag them out of one car and into another with old Ding and Columbia. They never came out of our bull car while they were with the show.

"One Sunday A.M. at Denison, Texas, the Old Man (Fred Buchanan) came down to the car where we were scuffling around and ordered us to just leave the elephants in the car, as he had withheld payment on them and had wired King to come and get them.

"King showed up at Ranger, Texas, and they spotted a box car on a track alongside our bull car, and we put runs across from door to door; then took old Ding and dragged the punks into the box car and chained them down. That was the end of our experience with them. We were later informed that Jake Newman bought them for the Sells-Floto Circus. They were taken to Peru, Indiana quarters, and Sammy Logan tried to break them but they died there during the winter."

Holdenville, Oct. 2, was the last day in Oklahoma and Robbins then moved into Texas for what would be the final week of the season. Initial date after a Sunday run was at Denison, Oct. 4, which was followed by Denton, Weatherford, Ranger, and Breckenridge, with the last stand of the 1926 season coming at Olney, October 9. According to the late E. W. Adams who furnished the author with the season's route, one week following Olney had been booked and billed but was cancelled on account of bad weather which had set in.

In anticipation of the season shortly to end the following advertisement had appeared in the Oct. 16, 1926 *Billboard*.

"WANTED FOR ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Winter Quarters. Painters and Woodworkers, as per route."

The Oct. 23, 1926 *Billboard* told of the last days of the Robbins route. The show had a big matinee and turnaway

at night in Denison, Texas, Oct. 4. A new, sandy lot about five blocks from the business district was used. There was a late arrival in Denton the next day. Even with this plus a long haul to the lot the parade went out on time. Matinee attendance was only fair but it was capacity that night. Weatherford, Tex., Oct. 6, saw the big top well filled at the matinee and a whopper crowd came out at night. Ranger, Texas, had only a fair matinee but turnaway in the evening. Breckenridge also had a fair matinee but capacity night house. Jerome Harriman, brigade agent for the 101 Ranch Wild West Show, spent 8 days in Denison doing opposition work against the appearance of Robbins Bros. ahead of his show but Ed Reid, in charge of Robbins Bros. opposition brigade, did wonderful work in keeping the country and city spots well covered. J. Doug Morgan's No. 1 Stock Company, travelling on two Pullmans, played day and date with Robbins at Denison. The company was a guest of Buchanan at a performance.

Photo No. 25—Elephants in Robbins Bros. street parade, Keokuk, Iowa, May 5, 1926. Photo by Alex Irvin (Joe Bradbury Collection).



A performance note said that Minnie Atzen, one of the prima donnas, is receiving flattering afternotices for her fine character acting and solo numbers in the spec. The article told of the season's close at Olney, Texas, October 9, and that afterwards the Robbins train passed through Kansas City enroute to the Granger quarters. Many of the show's troupers dropped off in K.C.

The 1926 season had been a fine one for Robbins Bros., perhaps the overall best Buchanan ever experienced during the 1923-31 period.

The Nov. 6, 1926 *Billboard* said that following the Robbins close Will Buchanan was to go to Chicago, then New York City, and Boston, and would later be back in Des Moines. Lonnie Buchanan had gone to Chicago. Earl Sinnott would winter in Granger and be in charge of work at the quarters.



Last news from Robbins Bros. in 1926 came in the Dec. 25 *Billboard* which said that Will T. Buchanan had arrived in New York after a visit to Sarasota. He declared conditions on the Florida west coast were not as good as in former years. Buchanan said Robbins Bros. had a winning season in 1926 and that the show will be enlarged for the coming season. After a short visit in New York City he will return to quarters in Granger.

The end of December brought to a close the fourth year of railroad show operation for Fred Buchanan after he returned to the business in 1923. Winter had now descended upon his Robbins Bros. Circus in quarters in Granger, Iowa. Buchanan's show had grown in four seasons from 15 to 24 cars. The future looked bright for him.

RUSSELL BROS. CIRCUS

1936, 1937, and 1938 Seasons

by James H. Webb, Jr.

When, in January 1936, the temperature at Rolla, Missouri dropped to 14 below, and the city's pipes froze, Russell Brothers Circus came to the rescue by lending its tank wagon for house-to-house water delivery. Sideshow boss canvasman Johnny Baker, who was spending the winter at headquarters with his new wife, Bee McCormick, manned the truck and became the most popular man in town.

The *Billboard* reported on March 14 that the show would open with new menagerie, marques, and concession tents; also, that the Springfield Wagon & Trailer Company had delivered a new elephant semi-trailer, with four more units on order for delivery before the April 16 opening.

On Saturday, April 11 Reb Russell, the cowboy movie actor and former all-American fullback who had been contracted as a concert attraction for the season, made a personal appearance at a Rolla movie theater in conjunction with the showing of one of his films.

The staff at season's opening consisted of Claude W. and Pauline Webb, owners and managers; R. M. Harvey, general agent; Harry Seymour, legal adjuster; Ray Blankenship, treasurer; James Webb, secretary and assistant treasurer; Bill Antes, press; Gene Enos, equestrian director; Elvin Welsh, menagerie superintendent of transportation and light plant; George Werner, lot superintendent; Bob O'Hara, assisted by Les Hutchinson, banners and reserved seats; and Frank Dungan, steward.

The advance included in addition to general agent Harvey, brigade agent Francis Kitzman, contracting agent Herman Q. Smith, advance press representative Justus Edwards, and



Reb Russell, feature of the concert is shown in the backyard of the Russell show in 1936. Kasiska Col.

special agent Joe C. Webb (not to be confused with Joe B. Webb, who was not connected with Russell Brothers Circus at that time).

Big show headliners included Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers, Walter Jennier and his sea lion Buddy II; Albert Hodgini, Jr. riding act; Frank Miller's menage horses, Conners Trio wire act, heel-and-toe catches by Ethel Jennier and Athleta, and the Great Dalbeanie. Producing clown was Buck Baker. L. Claude Myers was bandmaster, and

This billstand was used for the opening day in Rolla, Mo., on April 16, 1936. Prices advertised were: adults 35¢ and children 25¢. Pfening Col.



"Babe" Hutchinson played the calliope.

Reb Russell was the concert attraction. Jim Milne was manager of the side show, the main feature of which was an Indian village presenting tribal dances and handicrafts.

A variety of special paper was printed, and a 16-page rotogravure herald was issued for distribution ahead of the show.

The season opened at the Rolla fairgrounds on Thursday, April 16. Weather was good and the hometown rallied by declaring a half-holiday, closing schools and business establishments. Matinee business was good and the night show drew a full house.

Visitors on opening day included Mrs. Albert Hodgini Sr., and Mr. and Mrs. Harold van Orman, mother and sister of Albert Hodgini, Jr., who came to see "Bertie" inaugurate his new riding act.

Business dipped badly during the next few days in Missouri, but picked up at Hannibal on the 21st and continued from fair to good through 12 Illinois stands. Danville, on May 3, produced a straw Sunday matinee. Six stands in Indiana, while less productive than the Illinois dates, were fair. Ohio with 21 stands was spotty, with more bad days than good ones. Two days in Indiana were bad and 14 Michigan stands not much better although Muskegon on June 22 was the season's best day up to that time. Eleven dates in Illinois following one (Michigan City) in Indiana ranged from poor to fair, with only two good dates: Monmouth on June 30 and Pittsfield July 4. The Monmouth take was boosted by the purchase of 250 tickets by circus fan Art Sawyer for the employees of the Illinois Banker's Life Assurance Company, of which Art was secretary. Following the night show the staff and performers enjoyed a fish dinner as Art's guest in his riverbank lodge.

Marion and Jean Wallick, who performed a variety of tricks in the sideshow and the concert, joined in May and stayed for the season. A Scotch bagpipe troupe joined the side show lineup on June 4.

At Springfield, Illinois on April 23, Governor Henry Horner of Illinois visited the night show and bought tickets for all the youngsters who were on the midway when he arrived. Other visitors during the early weeks of the season included Clyde and Harriet



Albert "Bertie" Hodgini, Jr., and the members of his riding act posed at the backdoor in a 1936 photo. Wilson Col.



Frank Miller, Bobby Warinner, Genovieve Highes, Hazel King and Rube Eagan clown, appeared in the menage number on the Russell show in 1936. Author's Col.

Beatty at Newcastle, Indiana on May 8; elephant man Cheerful Gardner at Steubenville, Ohio May 18; Jesse Adkins at Columbus May 22; Annie Oakley's brother at Greenville, Ohio June 4; Mrs. Jerry Mugavan at Huntington, Indiana June 6; and Ken Maynard at Quincy, Illinois July 5.

Kathryn Brooks, heel-and-toe trapeze artist billed as "Athleta," was greeted on June 8 in her home town, Sturgis, Michigan, with a large bouquet presented by the city.

Business in Indiana and Ohio was hurt some by Cole Brothers opposition, but more serious damage was done in a few stands by following a small show named Rice Brothers, which had not left a good impression.

Weather from opening day through most of June struck an average for late spring and early summer, with sun, rain, and wind, a few hot days, and nights chilled by breezes from Lake Michigan.

On July 3, a monkey cage overturned during the move from Canton to Rushville, Illinois.

The period from July 5 to the end of August was for the most part a tale of desolation, with only a few oases in a desert of hot, dry weather and bad business. The stretch included 22 stands in Iowa, nine in Illinois, five in Nebraska, 14 in Kansas, and one each in Wisconsin and Missouri (not in that order).

That drought was a real nightmare: day after day and week after week with no relief, each day seeming a little hotter and dryer than the one before. Huge fields of corn had burned to the stalk and then been stripped by grasshoppers. Creek beds which had not seen a drop of water for weeks were dry as bones. On the lots there was no place to go for relief — seldom even a shade tree. One day Walter Jennier's seal Buddy refused to leave his tank. On another occasion Bob Fisher took a thermometer up to his flying act platform. It rose quickly to 120, the top figure, and burst.

There were, too, the usual problems,

including a labor shortage and, on August 11, a fire in an old grain elevator near the Auburn, Nebraska lot which, although doing no damage to the show, provided a real scare.

During this dismal period the show had hardly five days' business that paid operating expenses. Many days produced only half that amount. The management, desperate for some means to boost business, made widespread distribution of free passes to attract people, who would pay a service fee on the passes and, it was hoped, spend money elsewhere around the lot. Those passes were known as "John Gardners" because that fictitious name was stamped on each one.

A distinguished visitor at Emporia, Kansas on August 24 was William Allen White, known as the "Sage of Emporia," publisher of the then world-famous *Emporia Gazette*.

Competition, although present, was not serious. The Tom Mix Circus preceded us at Storm Lake and Carroll, Iowa, and Ringling-Barnum billing was with us at Concordia, Kansas.

One of the few oases during the long, hot spell was Creston, Iowa, which on August 5 came up with a good day's business in spite of a nerve-racking move. One of the month's rare rains had fallen the night before, and two or three trucks either overturned or were ditched on a dirt road. Last-minute re-routing over a paved but longer road was necessary, but the matinee was delayed only 40 minutes.

Reb Russell was given a homecoming on July 16 at Evanston, Illinois, where he had played on the Northwestern University football team and, in 1930, been selected as All-American fullback. The *Evanston News-Index* gave Reb a good play.

The performance at mid-season was as follows:

1. Grand entry on Hippodrome track.
2. Introduction of Reb Russell, former All-American football player and young western movie star, and his wonder horse Rebel.
3. Russell Brothers military ponies, presented by Frank Miller and Hazel King.
4. The Conners Trio in a unique tram-poline offering.

5. Russell Brothers elephants presented by Bobby Warinner and Genevieve Hughes in rings 1 and 3, respectively.
6. Swinging illuminated ladders: Ethel Jennier, Frances Fisher, Bobby Warinner.
7. The clowns: Rube Egan, Johnny Delmar, Jack Crippen, Jimmy Conners, Roy Barrett, and others.
8. The six Lelands, teeterboard acrobats: Tony Leland, Florence Leland, William Leland, Joe Ferguson, Hans Arndt, Gabby Dekos.
9. Russell Brothers liberty horses, presented by Frank Miller and Hazel King in rings 1 and 3, respectively.
10. Slides for life: the Great Alberto (Al Conners) on his feet and Reckless Violetta (Bertha Conners) by her teeth from the dome of the tent.
11. Captain Dalbeanie in his famous wagon wheel act ending with a step-by-step climb up a 10-foot staircase while straddling the wheel, a leap from the top to a table, and another to the ground.
12. Heel and toe catches: Ethel Jennier Ring 1; Athleta Ring 3.
13. Clown walkaround.
14. Bareback riding: Albert ("Bertie") Hodgini, Jr. and assistants Claudine Hayes and Helen Kilps, ending with horse-to-horse back somersault by Bertie.
15. Concert announcement: lineup on hippodrome track with Reb Russell, Genevieve Hughes, Wally and Jean Wallick, Ralph Clark, Rube Egan, and Indian congress.
16. Iron Jaw: Ethel Jennier, Bertha Conners.
17. Elephants: all four in center ring, worked by Bobby Warinner and Elvin Welsh.
18. Clowns: tooth-pulling stunt presented by Jack Crippen, Johnny Delmar, and the Leland troupe.

19. Buddy the sea lion, presented by Captain Walter Jennier.
20. Menage: Russell Brothers high school horses and Frank B. Miller's dancing horses ridden by Frank B. Miller, Hazel King, Bobby Warinner, Genevieve Hughes, Lola Hunt, Bessie Gardner, and Bertie Hodgini.
21. Tightwire: the Conners Trio in center ring, ending with back somersault on the wire by Al Conners.
22. Clowns: Leland troupe in comedy acrobatics in ring 1: Dalbeanie and Rube Egan on high stilts in ring 3.
23. Indian riding act by Bertie Hodgini and his girls.
24. Clown prize fight: Tony and Willie Leland, Gabby Dekos, Joe Ferguson, Jack Crippen, Johnny Delmar, and Rube Egan.
25. Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers: Bob Fisher, Maxine Fisher, and Eldon Day, leapers: Francis Fisher and Benny Gibson, catchers. Climaxed by double back somersault by Bob while blind-folded.

Wild West Aftershow

Featuring Reb Russell and his marvel horse, Rebel: Bertie Hodgini and Claudine Hayes, Australian whip-cracking: Wally and Jean Wallick, knife impalement: Rube Egan, comic roping: pow-wow dance by Indians.

Arrivals during the summer included Bob Stevens, who joined the advance staff on August 20: and a first-rate magician-illusionist named Fay who joined the side show.

During the same July-August stretch a number of key people checked out. Side show manager Jim Milne left on July 13, steward Frank Dungan on the 28th, fixer Harry Seymour on August 10, heel-toe artist Kathryn Brooks (Athleta) on the 17th, and

This special one sheet litho was made for the show in 1936 featuring the Hodgini riding act. Albert Hodgini was on the show in 1936 and again in 1938, when he presented a flying act in addition to the riding number. Pfening Col.

equestrian director Gene Enos on the 22nd.

The big news, however, was the departure of general agent R. M. Harvey and the controversy that surrounded the event. An article in the August 15 issue of the *Billboard* quoted Harvey as saying he had resigned in order to attend to urgent but unspecified plans for the future. He had, according to him, worked out everything satisfactorily with the Russell Brothers management, and he said that "the best of feeling prevailed between the owner and himself."

Two weeks later, in the August 29 issue of the *Billboard*, Claude Webb gave his version of the separation. Harvey, according to Webb, had written to Ray Marsh Brydon, owner of the Rice Brothers Circus, suggesting that they combine forces to form the largest motorized show on the road. Harvey had denied the accusation, Webb said, until confronted with copies of his letters, following which he resigned.

Contracting agent Herman Q. Smith left with Harvey. The concessions, in which Harvey had an interest, pulled out, and the show was without them for a few days until replacements arrived.

Office manager Ray Blankenship, promoted to the general agent job, left on August 23 to spend the rest of the season up ahead. I, who up to that time had been Ray's assistant, took over the office. Ernest Whetsel (known as "Cuz") a nephew of Claude Webb, took over as legal adjuster on August 11.

A free Sunday at Arkansas City, Kansas on August 30 provided an opportunity for many to visit an Indian pow-wow at nearby Ponca City, Oklahoma.

The business tide turned at Arkansas City and remained high through 12 Oklahoma stands. Our day was brightened, incidentally, on September 11, when "Smiley" Burnett, well-known for his comedy role in Gene Autry's western films, paid us a visit at Wilson, Oklahoma. A Mr. Stonehouse, an uncle of Al G. Barnes, visited at Durant. More time in

Oklahoma might have been advisable, but reports of an above-normal cotton crop in Texas sent us into the Lone Star State at Clarksville on September 15, for a total of 40 stands in the state. The first couple of weeks, while below the Oklahoma level, were not bad: but the rest of the time produced only fair business, dropping frequently to poor and rising to good only occasionally.

Jerry Martin's Georgia minstrel show was added to the side-show lineup for the southern tour.

The weather during the long Texas tour varied from ideal to soggy. Frequently we either moved or showed, or both, in heavy rain. At Terrell on October 25 (fortunately, a no-show Sunday, the lot was so soggy that it was 5 p.m. before all the equipment was placed.

A number of our people stopped off at the Texas Centennial World's Fair on September 20, a no-show Sunday, enroute from McKinney to Corsicana.

On October 12 C. M. Crump, a super-fine cook, joined the show and took over the cookhouse from Pauline, who had been in charge since the departure of Frank Dungan on July 28.

The final Texas stand was at Texarkana on October 29, where, during the night performance, the show's management was served with papers filed by a farmer who claimed that his barn had been covered with Russell Brothers paper without his consent. The action had quite obviously been instigated by Cole Brothers Circus, which was billed for Texarkana the following day and had been following us in other spots for the past couple of weeks. A constable was assigned to watch the equipment until the matter could be settled. We, faced with the loss of a day's business, made our guest as comfortable as possible, providing

Another special litho was designed for Reb Russell, an All-American football player, and cowboy actor. No litho company appears on the bill but it is thought that both the Reb Russell and Albert Hodgini posters were made by Donaldson, Pfening Col.



him with a folding armchair and a bottle of whiskey to see him through his all-night vigil. He fell into a sound sleep and stayed that way while the show's trucks moved quietly from the rear of the lot, crossed the nearby state line, and proceeded to the next day's stand at Prescott, Arkansas.

Eight Arkansas dates, despite cold and wet weather, produced fair to good business with only one exception. At Fordyce on November 3 it rained all day, turning to sleet after sundown. That, combined with the fact that it was election day, reduced the night tip to about a dozen people. We cancelled a performance for the first time in more than two years.

Showman Bud Anderson and his wife Peggy spent October 30 and 31 visiting the show and their old friends, Claude and Pauline Webb.

The season ended with a matinee-only stand at West Plains, Missouri on Sunday, November 8. Business was good. At the final dinner in the cookhouse tent a spirit of congeniality reigned. Several individuals, including the usually shy George Werner and 75-year-old sailmaker Tom Murray, stood and expressed their loyalty to Russell Brothers Circus.

The Russell Brothers Circus 1936 route covered just under 10,000 miles. The season, lasting 206 days, was the show's longest since 1933. Despite prolonged stretches of bad business, the season ended up a winner, if not a big one. It illustrated the economic potential of the circus business and the capacity of a show to recover with a few good breaks along with many bad ones.

1937 Season

Through the winter of 1936-37 there was the usual talk in Russell Brothers Circus winter quarters of going on the rails. While, also as usual, no action was taken on that point, there was an abundance of activity toward expansion and equipment replacement. During the winter orders were placed for new trucks and trailers, units for an enlarged power plant, special paper, and an almost complete spread of new canvas including big top 120-foot round with three 50-foot middles and, for the first time in the show's history, two rows of quarterpole: menagerie, (70 with three 40's), side show (60 with two 30's), side show banners, and marquee.

Claude Webb and Bob O'Hara went to Mexico, Missouri late in February and bought six new horses for Frank Miller to train. A couple of weeks later, on March 21, Bob was thrown from one of the new horses. He remained hospitalized with a broken leg until August, when he joined the show to finish the season.

C. C. Ellis, a certified public accountant from St. Louis, spent two days at

The following review of the 1936 Russell Bros. Circus performance in verse appeared in a 1936 issue of the *BILLBOARD*.

Russell Bros.' Circus

By Hazel L. King

With a pad on my knee, pencil in hand,
I'll write of a show the best in the land;
I'll tell you by verse and make it concise,
Of the Greatest Show on Earth for the price.

First there is entry, a spectacle grand,
Led by the Arabs of Claude Myers' Band,
Which during the show is augmented some
By calliope player Babe Hutchinson.

Next on the program to give you a thrill
Are 10 little ponies in military drill;
The great Alberto a slide makes for life;
Hanging by her teeth is done by his wife.

Three of our girls upon high ladder swing,
The band plays *Lights Out* and Fisher will sing;
The teeterboard Lelenas next take their place.

And scare you with bodies hurling thru space.

Two Liberty horses in each end ring,
Presented by Miller and Hazel L. King;

Dainty Ethel Jennier on high trapeze
Falls and catches with the greatest of ease.

Buddy, the seal, with a nonchalant swish
Plays horns and dances for a piece of fish;
The iron-jaw ladies next take the air,
A remarkably neat and daring pair.

A wagon-wheel act by Cap Dalbeanie,
Rosin-back turn by the great Hodgini;
Assisted by Helen and Claudine fair
To give the scene dash, beauty and flare.

Then Frank B. Miller, dean of trainers,
Next presents his equine entertainers;

Three ladies, two men this smart group comprise,
Their dancing brings you delightful surprise.

Bobbie and Gen split the pachyderm herd,
Work two and two in rings first and third;
While Bobbie is led thru a fast routine
By our Elvin Welsh in the background scene.

The Connors trio on the tight wire flash,
Jump their obstacles and to and fro dash;
Their comedy stunts on the trampoline
Uproariously funny, fast and keen.

Topsy, the chimp, is our Jack Crippen's pal,
A remarkably smart and knowing gal;
She rides in a wagon pulled by the goats
And eats in the cookhouse with other folks.

The clowns pull the funnies that make you laugh,
Tickle the artists as well as the staff;
They have to be good to bring a slight smile
To oldtimers like us once in awhile.

The Five Fearless Flyers the close begin,
A flourish of trumpets ushers them in;
Miss Francis and Bennie catch all the tricks
To please the elite as well as the hicks.

Maxine, the daughter, and Eldon O'Day
Forwards and back thru the ether sashay;
Bob Fisher himself is the flying star,
He seldom if ever misses a bar.

J.M. announces each act as they come,
Runs the show program with elan and hum;
Thru all this turmoil the seat butchers squawk,
Pop corn and peanuts and other things hawk.

Concert is last but in no way least,
Furnishes the folks with a Western feast;
If you like thrills and some cowboy action,
See "Reb" Russell, our stellar attraction.



L. Claude Myers, on the far right, and his big show bank pose at the backdoor during the 1937 season. Author's Col.



This overall lot scene was taken in Rock Springs, Wyoming, June 10, 1937. Author's Col.

Rolla early in February to draw up papers required to incorporate Russell Brothers Circus (note: the show retained its corporation status for only the 1937 season).

Theodore Lee, representing the Louisville Color Gravure Company, came in mid-March to firm up arrangements to print a rotogravure herald for pre-showdate distribution during the approaching season.

The Kansas City Star sent feature writer James Patterson to write up the pre-season preparations. The result was a spread of 100 column inches, with four photographs, in the April 11 issue of the Star.

Other visitors were the Lindemann brothers, proprietors of the Seils-Sterling Circus; and Mrs. William ("Honest Bill") Newton and her sons Clyde and Tom, all in February.

The staff at season's opening was as follows: Claude and Pauline Webb, owners-managers; Al McCabe, legal adjuster and concessions manager; James Webb, secretary-treasurer; Roland Smith, assistant treasurer; Joe C. Webb, director of public relations; L. Claude Myers, musical director; Bill Antes, press agent; Fred Ledgett, equestrian director; George Werner, lot superintendent; Georgy Wyche, assistant lot superintendent; Elvin Welsh, menagerie superintendent; Ernie Peterson, superintendent of transportation and light plant; Less Hutchinson, banners and reserved seats; Frank Dungan, steward; Harry Hammond, head waiter; and Ellis K. Webb, superintendent of winter quarters.

Edna Antes handled the pass box, moving later into the office wagon as assistant treasurer when Roland Smith left the show. Super-chef C. M. Crump took care of our appetites, and a young man named Ayres Davies, who would emerge later as a showman in his own right, served as usher and side show front door man. Youthful Charles Ellis Webb, son of Ellis K., began the

season as a menagerie hand and moved later to serve as an assistant big top boss. Alex De Beers was an outstanding sign painter.

Robert Stevens, Grady Hardin, and Milton Sydow manned the front door.

Principals on the advance were Ray Blankenship, general agent; Justus Edwards, contracting and press agent; and Francis Kitzman, brigade agent.

The big show performance was enlarged and improved along with the expansion in canvas spread. Top billing was shared by Bob Fisher and his Fearless Flyers, and Walter Jennier and his trained sea lion Buddy. Frank Miller, assisted by Hazel King and Veo D. Powers, presented the horse and pony acts, the former including a 10-horse menage presentation with Miller, Powers, and eight women. The Rebras Duo from France presented a high perch act ending with a sensational loop-the-loop on a bicycle in a narrow cylinder at the top of the pole

The author James Webb is shown in the ticket window of the office wagon in 1937. Author's Col.



by Mme. Rebras. The Connors Trio, consisting of Al, wife Bertha, and son Jimmy, performed a tightwire act climaxed by a back-somersault by Al on the wire; also slides-for-life from the top of the tent by Al (on wire) and Bertha (iron jaw), a high-bar act, and comedy antics.

The six Lelands had an excellent teeterboard act, and Tony Leland served as producing clown. Jules Jacob's bears performed in the center ring, and Veo D. Powers presented an outstanding rope balancing dog act. Miss Aerialetta (Mrs. Walter Jennier) gave a sensational trapeze performance that included heel-and-toe catches, a standing ankle drop, and a somersault from the trapeze to a perpendicular rope. Irene Ledgett, assisted by Elvin Welsh, handled the elephant act.

The presence of feminine beauty in the swinging ladder and other acts was impressive. Wives and single girls included Bertha Connors, Frances Fisher, Maxine Fisher, Helen Frederick, Maxine Frederick, Genevieve Hughes, Ethel Jennier, Irene Ledgett, Grace Morris, Mme. Rebras, Clementine Spencer, Genova Starr, Jean Wallick, Bobbie Warinner, Betty Willis, and Ginger Willis.

L. Claude Myers directed the band for his seventh consecutive season with Russell Brothers.

The performance was the biggest in Russell Brothers' history. Under equestrian director Fred Ledgett's skilled guidance it ran smoothly and, with flashy new costumes all around, made a great impact with audiences.

Clown Norman Carroll doubled effectively with antics during the come-in.

The side show, under the management of H. H. Hall, featured Jerry Martin's Georgia Minstrels, sword swallower Joe Sweet, Rex LeRoy, physical culturist: impalement artist Marion Wallick and his wife Jean, the Frederick musical troupe, and a variety of standard side show attractions.

There was also a pit show featuring a petrified man owned by a Professor Agnew.

The Wild West concert featured Chief Keys, rope-spinning, horse-roping, sharp-shooting, and knife-throwing; and Johnny Jarnegan, roping and trick and fancy riding. The performance was supplemented by the taking of motion pictures by W. C. Dean, who played baritone in Claude Myers' band, with the announcement the films would be shown later in local theaters.

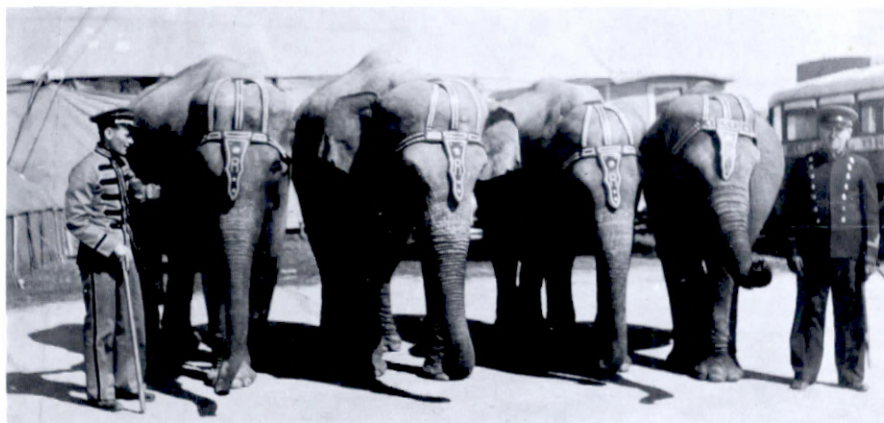
The season opened Thursday, April 15 at the fairgrounds, as it had ever since the show had established winter quarters there at the end of the 1933 season. Business, as usual on opening day, was excellent.

Four additional Missouri dates yielded fair-to-good business, but Illinois, with seven stands, was less kind. Business there ran from poor to fair. The lot at Greenville on April 21 was so soft that the equipment could not get on, and the day was lost. A return to Missouri for six stands brought no relief, and five in Iowa were little if any better. Business picked up at a matinee-only stand at West Point, Nebraska, on Sunday, May 9, but sank again at Columbus and Norfolk. Seven days in South Dakota and another 11 in Nebraska brought only a little improvement.

By way of partial compensation, the show was leaving an excellent impression, as indicated by repeated after-notice in the press which called attention to the quality of the performance, and to the cleanliness of the outfit in both appearance and management. The day before the Rapid City, South Dakota date, that city's police chief, recalling visits by grift shows, issued a public warning for the citizens to keep their doors locked. After looking the Russell Brothers show over he apologized, describing the show in the local newspaper as "exceptionally fine and the best here in recent years."

Noteworthy sidelights of the early weeks included the hiring, as a concert attraction, of an elderly man who claimed to be the original Jesse James. According to him, the famous outlaw had never been shot as reported. Our "Jesse's" specialty was to answer questions relative to the life and activities of the famous outlaw, which he had evidently studied with great care. Contracted at Mexico, Missouri on April 28, he and a man-wife team that performed wild west tricks which accompanied him to round out the concert, were released on May 1. The following day's stand was at Excelsior Springs, in the heart of Jesse James country. There, we were assured by James descendants and other natives, the presence of anyone making such a fantastic claim could have caused trouble.

Visitors at Clarinda, Iowa on May 6



The four elephants on the Russell Bros. Circus in the 1930s were RUBBER, MARGARET, ELSIE and SADIE. Pfening Col.

included many old friends of Claude, who had worked near there as a farm hand in his earlier years. His brother Charles and the latter's wife Ella were among those present.

Russell Brothers Circus's only experiment in the health field, begun at the season's opening, ended on May 9 with the termination of an agreement between the management and Dr. C. A. Conyers, who traveled with the show and maintained an office in his trailer. His compensation was paid by deductions from the salaries of show personnel. The arrangement, while superficially attractive, revealed many real or imagined illnesses that had never seemed to show up when no doctor was present.

Walter Jennier and his seal "Buddy" were featured for many years on the Russell show. His wife Ethel, was also featured on the single trapeze as Miss Aerialetta. Pfening Col.



The season, in its seventh week, was obviously off to a bad start. Partly to blame was the weather, which had been predominantly cold and wet, with frequent high winds including a near blowdown at Marshall, Missouri on April 29. The management, deciding to try its fortune in the great West, booked a week in Colorado and five days in Wyoming. Business picked up to at least a fair status, but from that point on the West was a great delusion. Utah with five stands, including two days in Salt Lake City; Idaho with 17, and Nevada with eight, brought only poor-to-fair business. Of 10 northern California stands, only one (Susanville July 17) was outstanding, and only one of 13 Oregon stands (Astoria August 6) proved a winner. Washington, although coming up with the season's biggest day (Bremerton August 14), was another loser.

The backtrack from the West began at Cle Elum, Washington on August 20. Five Washington stands were bad, as was Pendleton, Oregon on the 26th. Lagrande, for a change, produced a good day's business on the 27th. Idaho with three dates and Utah with four produced a succession of flops. Six Colorado dates showed only a little improvement. A stand at Lamar on September 12, with fair business, brought the far Western tour to an end.

A number of price changes took place during the western tour. We upped the adult general admission from 50 to 75 cents at Phillip, S. D. on May 16, and to 85 cents at Wells, Nevada on July 8. With business plummeting, we dropped back to 55 cents at Puyallup, Washington on August 17.

Tidbits of interest including snow (not much) in June, which few of us had ever seen so late, in Colorado: a visit at Salt Lake City by film actor Wallace Beery, who said we had "a hell of a swell show!" reluctant release of superchef C. M. Crump at Nevada City, California on July 21, whose drinking problem had gotten out of control; and on July 31, news of Alfredo Codona's murder of wife Vera Bruce, followed by his suicide. That information came as a shock to everyone, and especially to



Press agent Bill Antes joined the show in 1937, his first job on a circus. He is pictured holding a lion cub in 1937. Pfening Col.

those on the show who had trouped with Vera and Alfredo.

The Orton troupe, with perch, wire, and muscle grind acts, joined the show in Mid-June. The side show, now managed by Duke Mills, was beefed up at Corvallis, Oregon on August 2 by the addition of fat boy Tiny Cowan, human pincushion Jeff Griffin and his wife Lola, a hula dancer, and other attractions. Bob Stevens was sent ahead to serve as 24-hour man, being replaced as front door superintendent by Grady Hardin.

The matinee was lost at Salida, Colorado on September 9 due to a breakdown of the prop truck. The following day at Canon City, Bob and Irene O'Hara returned to the show after having spent the summer waiting for Bob's broken leg to heal. A visitor at Canon City was M. L. Hardman, who had ideas related to publishing a Russell Brothers program for the 1938 season.

Competition, while not a major problem, showed up in Utah, where we were behind Howe Brothers and ahead of Al G. Barnes; and California, where we followed Jimmy Heron's Famous Robbins at Nevada City. More bothersome were a general labor shortage aggravated by a walk-off by the menagerie crew at Salem, Oregon on August 3; the appearance of union organizers on the lot at Pasco, Washington on August 25; a solid rock lot at St. Helens, Oregon August 7, necessitating a last-minute switch to another location; and the Washington sales tax and a very demanding state representative at Vancouver to enforce its collection.

The West produced the season's best day at Bremerton, Washington on August 14, with a gross take of about

\$2,100; and the worst at Price, Utah, where less than \$300 came in (the daily nut was approximately \$1,200.00).

The western tour included many moves both long and, over mountainous roads, hard; but the excellence of the rolling stock kept the show moving and showing, almost invariably, on time.

The eastward trek, made with what we hoped would be the prosperous cotton fields of the South in mind, was swift. Moves of 193 and 220 miles took place on Sundays August 29 and September 5, respectively, with no show scheduled for either date. Montrose, Colorado, scheduled for Tuesday, September 7, was cancelled under local pressure because it threatened to compete with a hometown celebration. That resulted in a two-day stand in Delta, which produced fair business the first day and very little the second.

Between September 12 and October 27 we hopped from Oklahoma to Texas and back several times, with 10 stands in the former state and 28 in the latter. The hoped-for cotton-country relief did not materialize. The overall rating for the period ran between poor and fair. Partly responsible was the weather, with wind and dust in the barren Oklahoma dust bowl, heavy rains in several Texas spots and biting cold in others. Added to the bad weather was a succession of man-made problems in Texas. For the first time during the many years the show had played that state, it was necessary to cope with an amusement tax and to purchase state license tags for the rolling stock, which necessitated the weighing of the trucks. To make things worse, an atmosphere of unfriendliness amounting at times to hostility was evident

This fine big top interior photo was taken on the opening day of the 1937 season in Rolla, Mo. The center ring is offset to allow the outdoor rigging of the Bob Fisher flying act. Wilson Col.



Mrs. Edna Antes is pictured in the tax box in front of the marquee on the Russell show in 1937. Pfening Col.

among state and, in some cases, local enforcement officers. Especially obnoxious were officials at Wellington, Texas, who harrassed us in every way they could with petty demands.

On the positive side, a tie-in with the Panhandle South Plains Fair at Lubbock on September 27 and 28 produced good business and pleasant personal relationships.

In the meantime, staff changes were taking place. Assistant treasurer Roland Smith left the show on September 21, and was replaced by Edna Antes. Side show manager Duke Mills pulled out on October 2. A Mr. Dunne from the Crowley carnival took over, bringing a few freaks along, but he stayed only four days. Al McCabe left with his concessions personnel and equipment on October 5. The legal adjuster's slot, which Al had occupied in addition to handling the con-

cessions, was taken over by Ernest Whetsel.

To add further spice to the Texas tour, a truck turned over during a night move over muddy roads from Brady to Lampasas on October 12, and a cage tipped over enroute to Clarksville on the 24th. Competition was provided by Seal Brothers Circus, which was two days ahead of us at Borger, Texas and the Al G. Barnes show, which followed us by one day at Altus, Oklahoma.

The 1937 season ended with a ten-stad tour of the Ozarks—nine in Arkansas and the final day at Monett, Missouri (matinee only) on Sunday, November 7. There were two bright spots: Hot Springs November 1, which came up with the best day's business since Bremerton, Washington; and Mena the following day, which was almost as good. The other dates continued the dismal monotone that had plagued the show during most of the season. The result was the management's inability to pay the two-week salary holdback that was required of all personnel. Only the workingmen were paid in full: all others were given promissory notes until payment could be made.

The unpleasantness was topped off by the wreck of a stock van on the home run from Monett to Rolla, which resulted in the death of Black Devil, one of the menage horses.

Nineteen thirty-seven takes its place in history as the year in which Russell Brothers Circus expanded in both size and territory, reaching to the Pacific for the first time. Financially it was a season of near disaster, leaving the management with hungover debts to be added to the normal preparation expense for the new season.

Concluding with a personal note. I was married on December 4 to Margot Pierre, a special friend of many years in New York. Bill Antes was my best man. Margot began immediately to train for the assistant treasurer's job for the 1938 season.

1938 Season

The 1938 season has been called the worst in the history of the American Circus. Russell Brothers Circus, while sharing the misfortune of the outdoor show business in general, completed a season only slightly shorter than normal, from April 14 to October 16.

To get on the road at all required a special effort due to an acute shortage of cash. In addition to the usual preparation expenses, owner-managers Claude and Pauline Webb were determined to take care of the salary holdbacks that had remained unpaid at the end of the not quite disastrous but far from prosperous 1937 season.

Everything that could be mortgaged was hocked, including the show's two farms at Rolla, Missouri, and by virtue

Grand Opening

GALA 10TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

ROLLA

Rolla's Own Gigantic 3-Ring Circus

FAIRGROUNDS

Thur. 14th

April

A REALLY BIG, TRULY GREAT CIRCUS
This Year Grandier Than Ever
New and Different Throughout

Russell Bros.
BIG 3 RING
CIRCUS
& WILD ANIMAL MENAGERIE

UNSURPASSED ARRAY OF ARENIC STARS
 Acrobats • Aerialists • Equilibrists • Bareback Riders
 Equestriennes

MAVELOUS EQUINE DISPLAYS
 Dancing High School and Liberty Horses • Canning Ponies
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AMAZING TRAINED ANIMAL EXHIBITIONS
 Performing Bears • Educated
 Tonderous Elephants • Raring Arctic Dogs
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CLOWNS GALORE • **EXCITING WILD WEST**
COMPLETE MENAGERIE • **MUSEUM OF ODDITIES**
 (No No Extra Charge!) • With Musical Funsters
PULSE-QUICKENING MUSIC OF BANDS AND CALLIOPIES

TWICE DAILY
2 and 8 PM
Shows over at 2 & 8 PM

Streamlined to Present Day Trends!
 • Youth and Beauty • Gaily and Glamour • Breath-Taking Thrills and Sparkling Novelty
 • All Afforded to an Exhilarating, Fast-Moving Pace
NO OTHER CIRCUS OFFERS SO MUCH THAT IS SO GOOD FOR SO LITTLE!



TOPS IN ALL BUT PRICE!

New style ads were produced by Bill Antes for the 1938 season. The logo of the title and a girl with a horse was used for a number of years later. Wilson Col.

of shrewd management by the Webbs, the holdbacks were paid and the pre-season preparations took place as scheduled. The A-1 reputation of the Webbs for having honored debts in the past was, of course, an important factor in their ability to tap sources of credit in 1938.

The staff consisted of Claude and Pauline Webb, owner-managers; Charles Heaton, legal adjuster; A. G. Hardin, assistant legal adjuster; Joe C. Webb, acting general agent; James Webb, secretary-treasurer, Margot

(Mrs. James) Webb, assistant secretary-treasurer; Gene Enos, equestrian director; Ernest Peterson, superintendent of transportation and light plant; Robert O'Hara, reserved seats and banners; Ernest Whetsel, assistant reserved seats; "Hi-Brown" Bobby Burns, radio and press; and George Werner, lot superintendent.

Other key individuals included Jack Sampson, side show manager; Jack Kenyon, steward and lunch stand; C. V. Crawford, all other concessions; Lewis Schmideke, head mechanic; C. M. Crump, head chef; James Decker, assistant big top boss; Charles ("Rolla") Webb, kid worker; Tom Murray, sailmaker; Alex DeBeers, sign painter; Milton Sydown, front door superintendent; C. L. Alderfer, menagerie superintendent; Elvin Welsh, assistant menagerie superintendent; and Bennie Gibson, former catcher for Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers, superintendent of properties. John Fisher was head usher and A. C. Anderson, who had been head usher in 1937, was assistant big top boss in 1938.

Joe C. Webb headed the advance as acting general agent. Francis Kitzman continued as brigade agent, assisted by his wife Elsie and a crew of 12. Justus Edwards was general press representative; Jackie Wilcox, contracting agent; and Harry Weil, 24-hour man.

A variety of special paper was ordered, and Justus Edwards designed and supervised the production of an attractive rotogravure herald which was used for the first part of the season. It was replaced later in the season by an eight-page tabloid-type newspaper supplement.

The program at season's beginning was a strong one. Featured were the Stuart Roberts trio, aerial bars; Albert Hodgini, Jr.'s bareback riding act and, for the first and, as far as I know, only time in "Bertie's" career, his flying act; Russell Brothers high school horses worked by Will H. Scofield, who added his own horse, Sun Dance; and something new in the circus world in the form of a race on the hippodrome track between two teams of Arctic huskies pulling wheeled sleds, worked by Eddie and Kay Barbeau. Also included were the Morris troupe of teeterboard acrobats, the Aerial Ortons, wire acts by Don LaVola and Bob Atterbury, and a variety of other acts including liberty horses, military ponies, riding monkeys, the four Russell Brothers elephants, iron jaw slide by Grace Orton, comedy acrobats, swinging ladders, iron jaw ensemble, and leaping greyhounds.

Gene Enos was equestrian director and C. S. Brooks headed the 11-piece band. Individuals participating in the performance were Veo D. Powers, assistant to horseman Will Scofield

and owner-workr of his rope-balancing dog: Fred Guinup, military ponies: Stanley Richards, chair-balancing trapeze, and a wealth of female beauties including Jean Sullivan, Maxine Woeckner, June Billie, the Morris sisters, Grace Orton, Kay Barbeau, Crystabelle Roberts, Louis E. Atterbury, and Peggy Blackburn. Tiny Norma Jane Orton, above the center ring during the swinging ladder act with a special ladder of her own, stole that presentation.

Present on clown alley were Russell Brothers veteran Jack Crippen, Rube Eagan, Fred and Doodles DeMarrrs, Happy Star, Jiggs Bonfonte, Harry Villeponteaux, and T. Jeff Murphee.

The concert, headed by Tom Aumann, featured Bill Noble, Jr., billed as the "champion all-around cowboy of America."

Acts in Jack Sampson's side show included Jack's wife Clara, mentalist: the three Marlowes, Scotch Highlanders: Tiny Cowan, fat boy: Chick Simmons with his nine-member jazz band-minstrel show: Lola Griffin, Hawaiian dancer: Jeff Griffin, human pin cushion: Joe Sweet, sword swallower: and Pepper Joe, one-man band.

The season opened on Thursday, April 14. The place, as usual, was the Rolla fairgrounds: and the city, as usual, declared a half-holiday. Business was good. Twelve additional Missouri stands followed, in the state's northern and eastern sections. The show moved from Hannibal into Illinois for a stand at Jacksonville on April 27, and remained in that state throughone day, May 18, at Beloit, Wisconsin (where there was competition from Seils Sterling). The last 18 Illinois days were spent in neighborhoods and suburbs of Chicago, where the show made four one-day and seven two-day stands.

Unfortunately, I did not keep detailed day-to-day notes on the 1938 season, so that I am depending largely on memories of events more than 40 years past, and reports in the *Billboard*. What I do recall is that the pattern for the disastrous season began to take shape early. Even with allowances for the usual spring rains, business was consistently bad from the beginning. That the situation was general became more evident each day as news drifted in from other shows. Downie Brothers Circus, which shared with Russell Brothers leadership in the truck show field, folded on May 3. A greater blow was the closing of the magnificent, brand-new Tim McCoy Wild West railroad show at Washington, D. C. on May 4, only three weeks after its opening date. The stock and equipment were sold at a sheriff's sale. The loss was reported as being in excess of \$200,000.

Performers from other shows that



Irene Ledgett, often referred to as one of the best all around circus women of modern times, appeared with the Russell show in 1937 through 1939, working menage and elephants. She died on August 8, 1939 after falling off a truck on the Russell show. Wilson Col.

had folded or were unable to meet payrolls came to Russell Brothers looking for work. There was none and, in fact, the show was forced to cut its own salary payments drastically beginning early in the season.

The 18-day Chicago tour provided a novel experience with a variety of ups and downs. Runs were short and easy, but the rains were persistent (there were only three dry days) and at times very heavy. At Berwyn on June 1 the hardest downpour anyone on the show could remember turned the lot into a sea of mud in the afternoon, and at Blue Island on the 6th a furious downpour struck just at night opening time. Business, naturally, suffered badly, although the side show and the concert did surprisingly well. The local sponsoring groups cooperated fully, and the neighborhood newspapers were generous with pre-show publicity and complimentary after-notices. The Berwyn *Bee* said: "To the Russell Brothers Circus, hats off for a swell show under the worst of circumstances." Much of the favorable comment referred to the stock and the rolling equipment.

Seventeen days in Indiana broken by a stand at Greenville, Ohio on June 22, followed Chicago. Then the show returned to Illinois for 16 days, including another seven in Chicago neighborhoods and immediate suburbs. Business was good at Brainerd, in south Chicago, on June 29, and LaGrange came up with a banner matinee on July 4. Otherwise the situation continued to be bad, again because of general conditions abetted by rainy weather.

On July 1 Ernest Whetsel left to join the newly-organized Richards Brothers Circus, which was the beginning

of what later became Mills Brothers Circus.

A recent letter from Ayres Davies, who with his wife operated the Ayres and Kathryn Davies Circus during the late 1940's and the early 1950's, provided an interesting historic sidelight. Says Ayres: "I was with Russell Brothers for a part of disastrous 1938, and that is where I learned about the Chicago suburbs which was the backbone of our five-year operation."

Following five Illinois stands on a westward move from Chicago, Russell Brothers entered Iowa for six days beginning at Clinton on July 11. Three days in Missouri came next, followed by another 11 in Iowa; then, four days in Nebraska, 10 in Kansas, two in Oklahoma, three more in Kansas, and reentry to Oklahoma at Blackwell on August 19. Business remained consistently bad.

The depth of the 1938 problem for the circus world was becoming more evident as the season progressed. On June 26 John Ringling North, following refusal of the Ringling-Barnum personnel, acting under instructions from the American Federation of Actors to accept a 25 percent wage cut imposed as the result of drastically reduced business, closed the Big One for the season. On July 4 the Seils Sterling Circus, a medium-sized truck show owned and operated by the Lindemann Brothers, closed at Iron City, Michigan for the season—and, as it turned out, for all time. The Cole Brothers railroad show folded on August 3.

It should be mentioned, on the other side of the ledger, that Downie Brothers, which had folded on May 3, reopened August 8 for a 14-week second 1938 tour.

During the summer a number of significant changes in the Russell Brothers program had taken place. The Stuart Roberts trio pulled out early in the season. At Chicago Bob Atterbury and the Albert Hodgini, Jr. troupe left to make fair and park dates. Bob was replaced by Bernice Kelly, whose elephant "Jule" is the star of Smoky and the Bandit II, and "Bertie" by the Joe Hodgini family, which had started the season with Downie Brothers. Irene Ledgett joined in Chicago to ride menage and work the elephant act. At approximately the same time Teresa Morales, who had begun the season with Downie Brothers, signed up with heel-and-toe trapeze act and loop.

Will Scofield dropped out in Chicago to have Sun Dance, his specialty horse, treated for blindness. Roland Simpson, who had been with Ringling-Barnum, joined to ride menage. Callendar's trained goats and bears were in the program for a short period. Lawrence Cross, a Russell Brothers veteran who had not been included in the season's opening lineup, joined clown alley.

Buck Steele replaced Bill Noble, Jr. as the Wild West concert star and, in addition, presented his liberty horses in the big show.

An especially significant acquisition took place on July 12, when Sir Victor and Madame Bedini joined to fill a gap left by the departed Morris teeterboard troupe. Included were Madame's "Act Beautiful" with her white Arabian horses and "sit-up" pony, and her comedy dog-pony act. The Bedinis' horse Black Diamond was worked by Irene Ledgett in the menage act and ridden by Sir Victor himself in a then famous "Yankee Doodle" number. He, unfortunately, suffered a stroke and had to be taken home to Aurora, Illinois, by Madame Bedini, who was out of the lineup until September 27. She rejoined at Little Rock, Arkansas. Joe Hodgini, her nephew, worked the stock in her absence.

The *Billboard* of August 20, 1938 stated that Lew Friebe was winning applause with solo numbers on the callopie and that Gene Enos was keeping the program moving at (quoting the Boone, Iowa *News-Republican*) "a fast clip, free of awkward pauses."

In the executive-administrative lineup, James F. Baker, husband of performer Teresa Morales, became acting legal adjuster. King Baile replaced Jack Sampson as sideshow manager. Following the early departure of Jack Kenyon, Norman Anderson, son of showman "Bud," took over the grease joint. "Blackie" Benadone signed on as steward, but blew after a few weeks.

On the advance, T. Dwight Pepple replaced Jackie Wilcox as contracting agent.

The already bad season took a sudden and drastic turn for the worse with a collision between two of the show's trucks that took place at Enid, Oklahoma on August 20. Seven workmen were hospitalized. Four were released, but three were injured seriously. The circus was sued for a total of \$67,000 by the three victims, and attached by the sheriff. Although allowed to move, departure from Oklahoma was prohibited until the matter could be cleared up. That required spending a solid month in the state, and the necessity to play many unproductive spots.

Following a court decision to impound the show's receipts, a law enforcement officer occupied the office with Margot and me during the night show at Oklahoma City on August 30. By means of the underground communications system sometimes employed by show folks in the interest of self-protection, a system was cooked up to keep the amount to be turned over to the law at an absolute minimum. Individuals, known to us but not to the lawman, came to collect



C. S. Brooks, replaced Claude Myers as bandleader in 1938. Brooks is shown, second from right standing, with the Russell band at the backdoor. Brooks was the mail agent in 1938. Pfening Col.

bogus bills for groceries, animal feed, and gasoline. We, with the approval of the lawman, paid promptly. Ticket purchasers, also recruited from the show's own ranks, were given change up to ten times the amount of the small bills they presented. The night's payoff to the law amounted to less than \$10.00.

The sheriff next appointed a trustee to travel with the circus and impound whatever funds might be available. An Oklahoma City lawyer named Charles Moss was appointed traveling

This special litho of Frank Miller was used by the Russell show during the 1936-37-38 seasons. It was designed and printed by the Donaldson Litho Co. Pfening Col.



representative of the District Court of Oklahoma City. He, while never neglecting his responsibility to the court, proved to be an understanding individual, and the relationship was a pleasant one. Since receipts were consistently low, frequently less than expenses, his collection of funds was not a great task.

The crisis came at a time when Russell Brothers Circus was without a legal adjuster. Jimmy Baker, husband of performer Teresa Morales, was filling in; but when the Oklahoma litigation came up the Webbs sent for "Kid" Bartlett, former fixer for the Al G. Barnes Circus. The solution arrived at was for the show to file mortgages in favor of the Baker-Lockwood Manufacturing Company for the canvas, Mrs. Julia Sullivan for the animals, and the Springfield Wagon & Trailer Company for the rolling equipment. The circus was sold, in a legal sense, at Talleguah, Oklahoma on September 20 to the mortgagees, who appointed Claude Webb as their caretaker-manager. The show was released, and moved the next day to begin a 21-day tour of Arkansas at Ft. Smith.

An interesting highlight of the Oklahoma tour, incidentally, was a homecoming manifestation by the people of Hominy, Oklahoma for their fellow-citizen Grady Hardin on August 21. Banners were on display in the town's business section reading: "Welcome to Russell Brothers Circus and Grady Hardin."

Arkansas provided no relief in business; nor did the home state of Missouri, in which the final four stands were made. The season ended at Fredericktown with a matinee on October 16. The best the show could do for its personnel was to pay five dollars to each individual on closing day.

An article in the October 29, 1938 issue of the *Billboard*, summarizing the Russell Brothers season, quoted Claude and Pauline Webb as stating



A group of clowns on the Russell show in 1938, left to right, unknown, Jeff Murphee, Lawrence Cross and Fred DeMarr. Pfening Col.

that it had been the roughest in their entire career together. The show had, nevertheless, managed to stay out for 186 days. The distance traveled, due to a three-weeks concentration in neighborhoods and suburbs of Chicago, totalled only about 8,000 miles. Nine states were visited.

As an epilogue to the 1938 season, the Webbs assembled a circus for two indoor dates. It played Hutchinson, Kansas from November 14 to 19 under auspices of Cyrus Grotto; and Joplin, Missouri November 22-26 sponsored by Azotus Shrine.

The program included the Clarke family, equestrians; Walter Jennier and his sea lion "Buddy," Aerialletta (Mrs. Jennier), high trapeze; the Great Dalbeanie, wagon wheel on steps; the Clarkonians, flying act; and Madame Bedini's act beautiful with four Arabian liberty horses and "Pete," hindleg pony. Also in the lineup were wirewalkers Jack and Clara Moore and Althema and Catherine, the Hartzell Duo, comedy horizontal bars; Wade & Wade, hand balancers; the Uniques, juggling; Sidney Rink and his mule "Ebenezer," the four Russell Brothers elephants worked by Elvin Welsh, and a collection of clowns. C. S. Brooks was musical director.

Any hopes the management might have had to recuperate some of the summer's losses were not realized. Business followed the dismal seasonal pattern.

The following note from Ayres Davies provides an interesting after-note:

"The last time I saw Russell Brothers Circus was in Dixon and Beloit, Illinois in the spring of 1941. By that time the World War II boom was on and the show was doing well under an apple green top. Art Concello bought the show and the Beckman-Garity carnival train, and put Russell Brothers on rails in 1944. James H. Cole and his first wife, Gracie and Dave McIntosh, and my wife Kay and I, visited after it

had become the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1946. It was really the old Russell show loaded on rails. The stake driver was there, the office, the pole wagon, and the canvas loader. Several years later the defunct 10-car Sparks circus was acquired, and most of the old Russell Brothers truck show equipment was discarded."



This is the front page from an eight page newspaper courier designed by Justis Edwards for the 1938 Russell tour. Pfening Col.

Thanks to Ayres for his valuable help with this brief history of Russell Brothers Circus from 1934 to 1938, inclusive. He lives at Ponce Inlet, a

municipality near Daytona Beach which he helped establish in 1963. He was the first mayor, and has served consistently on the town council. He has re-entered show business by leading a movement to restore a badly-deteriorated 168-foot lighthouse and turning it into a major tourist attraction. And naturally, he keeps in touch with the many circuses and their people, past and present, in Florida.

Sincere thanks also to the following: Edna Antes, who, after entering the show business with her late husband Bill on Russell Brothers in 1935, went on to a distinguished career with Ringling-Barnum and Beatty-Cole that was interrupted in 1980 by a broken leg; Francis Kitzman, who in his 83rd year is spending his winters in Hallandale, Florida and his summers in his old home town, Rochester, Minnesota; Charles ("Rolla") Webb, now retired in Gainesville, Florida; and Harry Hammond, presently road treasurer for the under-canvas Beatty-Cole. Also most helpful was Irv Romig, who at 15 spent the 1935 season with Russell Brothers as a member of his parents' Romig & Rooney troupe, and now, at his home-headquarters at Southfield, Michigan, operates the Rickey the Clown enterprises, which books entertainment designed especially for children (Irv, incidentally, is Rickey). His mother, Elizabeth Rooney Romig, lives nearby. His father, Carl Romig, died in November 1979 at age 86. Irv's sister Fay, who was 11 years old when she performed with the family troupe in 1935, is now Yvette Snyder. She lives in California, where she has trained animals for Hollywood films. Irv's adopted sister, Gracie Sykes, is now Gracie McIntosh, owner of the M & M Circus.

Thanks most of all to my late uncle, Claude W. Webb, who read this manuscript prior to his death at his home in Sepulveda, California on December 5, 1980. He would have been 87 years old on January 6, 1981. He and his late wife Pauline deserve a great deal of credit for their significant contribution to the history of the circus in the U.S.A.



HAZEL KING, Rider and Horse Trainer

By John Daniel Draper

The circus world has lost another of the great personages of the sawdust ring, horsewoman Hazel King of Gainesville, Texas. Her memory will be highly respected by professional equestrians as well as by other colleagues and the general public who came to know of her work. Even at age 70, after retirement, Hazel, with her beloved white high school horse "Major", showed pride and polish 4ey pranced in the limelight of the Dallas Cotton Bowl for a performance of the Gainesville Community Circus.

Hazel King was the daughter of Col. James A. Panting of London, England and Anne Addis Panting of Grand Rapids, Michigan. A native of Oregon, she grew up near the little town of Durkee on the old Oregon Trail, where she was born on February 13, 1890, living on a ranch surrounded by the open range, she learned to ride early. Catching and breaking wild horses were part of her everyday life. Her father managed a gold mine and her mother was a musician. Hazel tried both music and school teaching, the latter in the Look-Out Mountain District, but she soon found that her real interests lay in other directions.

From the Baker County Fair, when she was 19, she went on tour with Dick and Agnes Stanley, who were operating a small wild west show. On that show was Jack Hoxie, the future western movie star who was soon to become her husband. After a winter in Boise, the couple rejoined the Stanleys in California the next summer (1910). Unfortunately, Dick Stanley was killed in a bucking horse accident and the show folded. All the employees sought new positions in one of the early movie studios in Glendale, either the Bison Co. or James Young-Deer or Selig.

While at California's first big rodeo, held in Anaheim on the site of Lucky Baldwin's old race track, Hazel saw some Arabian horses stabled nearby. They were the property of playwright Richard Walton Tulley and his wife, novelist Eleanor Gates. After a first ride on the gray stallion "Oberon First", she vowed that she would own an Arabian if she earned enough money at the rodeo. She did just that, winning the relay, steer roping, fancy foot roping and she placed second in trick riding. She bought the 2 year old "Huraq", which she trained to do many tricks. She enjoyed this horse for 4 years until he became ill and died.

The picture business being poor for cowboys, Curly Eagles and Jack Hoxie decided to take out a wild west show. After the first week of showing in Oakland, the season turned into a disaster. Jack and Hazel along with Minnie Thompson, a cowgirl from the 101 Ranch, then went to work on Kit Carson Buffalo Ranch. After that show closed, they stayed in Obion, Tenn. until February 1913, when they returned to the Los Angeles Rodeo. In May of that year Hazel and Jack separated. She played rodeos until the end of that season and was again in the rodeos in 1914 and 1915. She was also a silent movie player in such roles as pioneer woman, gypsy and member of an Indian tribe. She trained dogs for movie work and claimed that she was the one who first had the canine attack the villain, saving the heroine just in the nick of time.

In 1918, as movie business was slack and she was in need of a steady job, Hazel joined the Al G. Barnes Circus as a cowgirl with the wild west. It was

Hazel King is pictured just prior to the menage number of the Russell Bros. Circus in 1936. Howland Photo.



here that she met and married the boss hostler, John Logan. As a wedding present she received from her husband a beautiful gold pin containing the thumb claw of the Al G. Barnes lion, Caesar Wallace. It had been mounted for Mable Stark and was sold to John Logan, who had the following engraving put on the back of it: "From Johnnie to Hazel 5/10/1918". Hazel treasured this memento and kept it in her possession until she presented it to a museum in 1976.

In the big show, in addition to doing "Spec", menage and posing horse, she rode on the hippodrome track as the "Goddess of Liberty" behind Austin King who, as Uncle Sam, was riding Roman and driving 3 teams ahead of him. She also did trick riding in the after show. When help became so short due to army inductions, Hazel was one of several girls who donned coveralls and, for one dollar extra pay per day, helped on the big top tear down. Also, she took charge of a "four up" and regularly moved wagons between the lot and the train.

Then one day Logan was fired and they both moved over to Yankee Robinson for the rest of the season. Shortly after they had joined, Frank Miller replaced Charles Barry as equestrian director on Yankee Robinson. Hazel worked in the same ring with Miller and helped him with the menage routine until it has been mastered. Out of appreciation, he was to help Hazel later in positions on both Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and on Russell Bros.

In 1919 Logan went on a road construction job and Hazel stayed in Minneapolis, painting greeting cards for Buzza Co. However, the circus called her again and she went to the Granger, Iowa quarters for rehearsals. After the show had been on the road for about 2 weeks, Logan showed up. Buchanan would not hire him and Hazel was dismissed because it was felt that she would not stay on the show if her husband were not there.

It was then pretty much from here to there until they arrived on the show of Lucky and Honest Bill, where Logan lasted just about one month. He went to work next in the wheat fields around Norton, Kansas and Hazel got a job in a tubercular sanatorium.

In 1920 they both went with the show put out by Lucky Bill. Hazel worked the come-in as a rube and also one elephant and the pony act of Walt



Nelson. When Logan was fired yet again, Hazel took her fine bay menage horse, "Rambler", to perform at the fairs at both Hutchinson and Great Bend.

Next Hazel and her husband went with the Beckman and Garrity Carnival, where he drove a 4 horse team and she worked a menage act with "Rambler" and trained 2 dogs for the start of a dog act. She remained with this carnival through 1922. At this time, in addition to "Rambler", she also owned "Brilliant", the beautiful white horse with the white buggy and harness.

In the 1923 season Hazel was on Christy Bros. where she did menage and hurdle acts. One Sunday, Bessie Braken and Hazel visited John Robinson's Circus, where they were offered ten dollars more per week than they were getting from Christy. Consequently, they transferred to John Robinson's Circus where the finished the season. Hazel was back on Christy Bros. in 1924 and 1925. In 1924 she worked the goose act in the barnyard number that was presented on the front track. Dressed in a Bo-Peep outfit, Hazel worked with geese, rabbits, goats, pigs, lambs, chickens and white cats. She also did menage, a dog act and ladders. At that time Merritt Belew was serving as equestrian director. The following year Hazel also did the waltz and rear and lay back from the side saddle. She never did that act again as it was going out of style about this time.

The season of 1926 was spent on Hagenbeck-Wallace where William Wells was equestrian director. Hazel did a pony act, dog act and menage. She

Best known for her years on Dailey Bros. Circus, she is shown here with an eight horse liberty group in the winter quarters in 1946. Wilson Col.

also did the broad jump with the show owned "St. Patrick".

Since at that time Sells Floto was considered a stepping stone to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Hazel applied for a job on that show. She was accepted there in 1927. She did ponies, come-in with a couple of clowns, aerial ballet, menage and high jumps. At the

end of the season Hazel, who had divorced Logan in 1923, married Mr. King, who was assistant to Cap Curtis, boss canvasman on Sells Floto.

The couple moved to Chicago where King worked with the Donnelly Printing Co. During 1928 Hazel found it hard living without the circus. About this time Frank Miller contacted her to join him on the fair circuit. She rode his high school horse "Eagle" while he rode the palomino "Goldie". Miller had trained both of these 5 gaited American Bred saddle horses for high school work.

In 1929 Miller on "Goldie", Hazel on "Eagle" and Betty Rieffenach on "Missouri Girl" rode a beautiful menage act on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. These were the famous dancing horses trained by Frank Miller. Hazel also rode jumps for that season. Since she was in only two acts, she always felt that 1929 was the easiest season she ever had.

For both 1930 and 1931 she worked at Mrs. A. C. Thompson's Riding Academy in Chicago. By 1932 the depression was very serious. While Mr. King continued to work in Chicago, Hazel raised vegetables on a 5 acre tract which her parents had offered to her at Delray Beach, Florida.

Now separated from Mr. King, she eked out a bare existence in 1933 with the George V. Adams Rodeo Company and finally by 1934 she went on relief in California.

When Frank Miller went to Russell Bros. in 1935, he summoned Hazel to come to Rolla, Missouri to help train new horses. She served on that show for 3 seasons, working various acts wherever needed. They included a



riding monkey, menage, single liberty horse number and dogs.

In 1938 and 1939 Hazel was the horse trainer on the new circus put out by Parker and Watts. She assembled an 8 horse liberty act, trained 3 high school horses and also bought horses for parade teams. Among the horses that were bought at this time was the white horse "Major".

The year 1940 found Hazel King with concessions and a pony ride on fairs and picnics in the vicinity of Fort Smith, Arkansas. She also did a liberty act, menage, ponies and dogs.

When Mr. Watts went to Cole Bros. in 1941, Hazel was surprised by a contract with the show. There she did menage and a gaited horse number and trained some of the girls to ride menage. In September of that year she went with Mr. Watts on his winter show attempt which was a complete disaster.

From January 1942 until the fall of 1949 she was with Ben Davenport's

Dailey Bros. Circus. Finally Ben told her that the "big show was over" and to go and "get yourself another job". Consequently, she went to work for Gil Gray from 1950 until 1956. With that organization she worked liberty horses and dogs and trained a pony act and a new liberty act.

Hazel King's position on Dailey Bros. was very significant and unique. She in fact at one time or another served as ring stock boss, horse trainer and superintendent of horses as well as cowgirl and performer of pony drills, liberty horses, high school and menage acts, dog acts and a novelty elephant, horse and dog number. For the 1944 season she trained the 6 pony stallion act in a special routine that had been used on the old Gentry Bros. Dog and Pony Show. In tribute to a great contemporary trainer and performer, in her autobiographical notes she said, "I think perhaps Johnnie

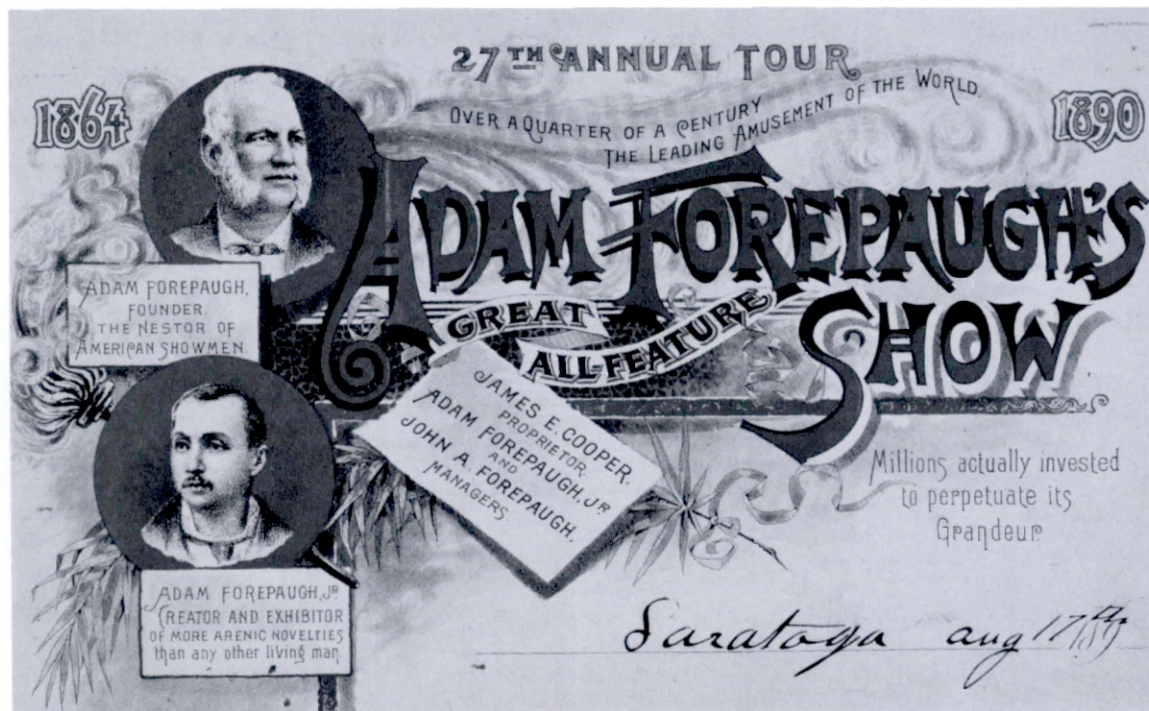
Herriott is the only person today who knows the routine."

During her years with Dailey Bros. her principal colleagues in animal training and performing were Jim O'Dell, Tommy O'Brien, Burt Wallace, Red Freivogel and Tiger Bill Snyder.

Personnally, Hazel King in her closing years was a very unassuming person who was eager to talk of her professional life and to keep in contact with friends such as Rosa and Bobby Gibbs and the Herriotts, among others. Summarizing her years after retirement she said, "During 1956 to 1958 I worked with the Gainesville Community Circus on what few dates they had. Now the dog act is gone, "Major" is gone and I live quietly with one pet dog, "Concha", who helps run the household."

And so, Hazel lived on a quiet street in Gainesville for another 23 years, where she died on July 28, 1981.

BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



Adam Forepaugh is acknowledged as one of the truly great circus owners of all time. His first circus operated in 1865 and he continued until his death in 1890. Forepaugh erected a permanent circus building in Philadelphia, Pa., in 1865, and took to the road the following year.

This letterhead used by the Forepaugh show in 1890, following his death is lithographed in blue and black with the title in gold.

SIG. SAUTELLE'S NEW SHOWS



BIG ONE-RING CIRCUS

Sig Sautelle spent his life in the small time. Never a major force in the business, he nevertheless operated wagon, boat, railroad and truck shows at different times in his career. This one sheet, stock lithograph was printed by the Russell & Morgan division of U. S. Printing in the 1890's, possibly 1893. This fine bill has a soft brown motif with red lettering on the title. The expression on the clown's face obviously reflects his awe at the riders' ability to hold their impossible position. Original in Pfening Collection.